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STORIES OF SCIENCE AND FANTASY

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## CHILDREN OF THE CHRONOTRON

by S. J. BYRNE



# Introducing the

# AUTHOR



*S. J. Byrne*



UP to the time I was twelve years old I was a normal, healthy child, and if three things had not occurred all at once to twist me out of the norm I might have grown up contentedly and made an honest living manufacturing buttons. However, those three things *did* happen. One: I looked at the moon and suddenly saw it for the first time as a globe rather than as a flat disc in the sky. Alive or dead, it was a world, floating in space. Two: a friend of mine introduced me to the first issue of *Amazing Stories*. Three: My father gave me an old beat-up typewriter.

I've been beating up typewriters ever since . . . However, my turning to author in the field of Science Fiction was only the inevitable develop-

ment of a deadlier contagion. I was first and foremost a fan—and always shall be.

Life story? Well, after residing in St. Paul, Minnesota, for twelve years, I headed West and have been going "West" ever since. (We're running out of horizontal West, but it's still available at a ninety degree angle!) In California (later on) I met and married the girl who has contributed as much to my work with her patience and understanding as I have with sheer bombast and perspiration. We have a boy, a girl and our own home in San Fernando Valley.

Science studies in high school and university led to linguistic studies, which terminated in a Master's degree and completed Teachers' col-

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Front cover painting by Malcolm Smith, illustrating a scene from, "Children of the Chronotron." Interior illustrations by W. E. Terry and H. W. McCauley.  
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# The Editorial

EVER since the MWA (Mystery Writers of America) was formed back in the middle forties, we've been wondering when some effort would be made to "organize" the writers of science and fantasy fiction. This has finally come to pass.

We received an announcement from Los Angeles the other day, under the heading, "*Science-Fantasy Writers of America*." The mast-head carried such august names as Ray Bradbury, President; Stuart J. Byrne (author of our cover story this issue) Executive Vice President; Cleve Cartmill, Vice President; and Forrest J. Ackerman, Secretary. This new writers' group already has some thirty or more members (mostly West Coast) and the number will undoubtedly expand during the months ahead.

The three aims of the SFWA are stated as follows:

1. *To improve the financial status of science-fantasy writers by bettering conditions of rights and rates.*
2. *To enable science-fantasy writers to know each other and to compare their work and experiences in the field.*
3. *And by publicity, awards, and other methods of promotion to improve the prestige and standing in the eyes of the general public. ....*

The SFWA went on to state that the organization would pattern itself largely after the MWA.

WE think each of these three aims is a noteworthy goal,

and in spirit we are for them one hundred per cent. However we do feel there are some pitfalls the group should studiously avoid. They include misdirected purpose, false sense of power, and threats or demands.

FIRST of all let us consider the writer as an individual. A writer is not hired by a publisher. He is a free-lance professional submitting his work on an open market to whom-ever he wishes. Each market may present an individual situation—and usually does since editorial requirements, etc., differ and the writer must be prepared to meet each market with its particular needs in mind. Along these lines varying word rates should not be the criterion for the production of "better material". This "better material" is predicated upon the theory that a writer will put more quality into a story if assured a greater financial return.

THIS, we hasten to point out, is only a theory. It can, and frequently does, work out in fact, but it is not necessarily true. For example, how does a writer determine the quality of his work? Is it something he can turn on and off at will—or show in varying degrees of literary merit? We have heard of science fiction writers who maintain, if they are writing for a cent a word market they simply turn out a cent a word story; if it's a two cent market the resultant story will be a two center; similarly, three cents and on up. One is led to assume, if this be

true, that there must be some sort of gear shift attached to their typewriters whereby the writers activate whatever category they have committed themselves to.

**S**UCH an idea, of course, is utter nonsense. Yet there are writers who will tell you this and really believe it. This kind of writer is certainly misdirected. In our mind a writer, no matter what market he may be "slanting" for, should turn out the best darn story he can—each and every time he writes one. We do not believe that good stories are written with a price tag on Page One. The price tag is attached after the story is submitted, by people who will recognize its value—the editors.

The writer, certainly, can have a hand in the selection of the price tag, in that he can choose his markets.

**T**ALENT, as such, cannot be determined by word rates. Talent—and quality—can be determined only by steady production over a period of time; as a writer becomes more experienced in his work he will develop an individual style, utilize little tricks of writing singularly his own; he will, in short, establish a reputation for himself. His reputation will go a long way toward determining the amount of money his stories can command. And it might be well to add that "reputation" is not actually what an editor is purchasing—it's quality. The writer lays his reputation on the line with every submission. If he hits consistently in the markets he aims for he knows his reputation is secure. If he starts missing he knows something is wrong. A reject is a good warning to a writer (even though the story may eventually sell to a mar-

ket other than the one he aimed for) and the smart writer sits down and analyzes that reject. He doesn't sit on his laurels. That's like sitting on a cloud, mighty soft, but brother, the ground's a long way down and the fall can be fatal. He uncovers that reject's faults and avoids them in the future as much as possible.

**M**ISDIRECTED purpose then is not healthy for either the individual writer—or the group. Stories are merchandise and you don't attempt to jackup the wholesaler unless you can prove that the retailer is crying for the goods. If that's the case the wholesaler moves of his own volition.

**S**O much for the writer as an individual. Now we come to a group of writers, organized toward the purpose of increasing word rates and conditions generally throughout

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"Watch it Harris, you're aiming high!"





Facing destruction, Earth's last immortals sent an emissary through time to alter history. Thus, he appeared in 1952, searching for the—

# CHILDREN of the CHRONOTRON

by S. J. Byrne

**W**HEN their sun began to wane, the Xlarnans at first retreated underground to hoard the heat and life-supporting energies which their nuclear generators could supply. But as their world grew colder, century after century, they devised a means of creating a substitute for the ionosphere—a protective layer of radioactive gases in the upper reaches of the sky which could warm them by means of its slow, controlled reaction, give them eternal light, and yet absorb its own harder radiations.

Thus—a planetary cell of life, is-

olated from the universe, independent of solar heat. And the Xlarnans at last emerged from their subterranean cities to take up life anew in a tropical Paradise that knew neither nightfall nor seasons. They missed the starlit night skies of old, the sunrises and sunsets, and most of all the stupendous celestial rainbow, the Great Ring, which some of them believed to be formed of the particles of a large satellite that had encircled their world back in the dim Beginning.

But the time arrived when they knew they were losing control of their reaction sphere in the sky. The

hard radiations increased inexorably in spite of all the coolants they could generate and send aloft. They had to admit that the day would come when they would be destroyed by the very instrument that had given them an extra hundred millions of life.

At the end of time—the Xlarnans, pressed against a wall, the reaction sphere, from which came hard radiations, burning them. The ethnic urge to survive in the face of swiftly approaching death. Necessity mothering invention. And then—

*The Chronotron . . .*

Electronic envelopes speeding faster than light. Three dimensional nature rejecting the envelope. Only in Time can anything be in two places—along the duration line.

*The Chronotron — planting new Cause in the beginning of Effect. And there is alternate time.*

Large numbers of Xlarnans, through the Chronotron, back to the beginning of the reaction sphere era, an already advanced race with the course of another hundred thousand years to run before facing the threat from the sky once more.

The first cycle ends, and at the last extremity of alternate time veritable super beings achieve immortality. With immortality, less procreation. And at last, sterility.

Still the deadly threat above them. The daily promise of sudden and complete devastation. Now there are rockets at last, but certain techniques and necessary dis-

coveries in the fields of chemistry and metallurgy elude them. Attempted space flights end in collisions with meteors or death due to radiations in the outer void — but escape velocity never achieved.

Then came — *THE THEORY . .*

Very vague and unidentifiable fossils discovered in astoundingly deep strata. Nothing definite, but a bothersome hint of high development. Hypothesis evolved into theory; Xlarn had known a complete geological cycle before the Beginning, perhaps when the Great Ring around the planet had been a moon! Granted this previous cycle, one might assume a complete evolutionary development. If such a world had existed on Xlarn previously then perhaps some highly intelligent race had evolved. They might have been threatened by some cataclysm in their own time and found a means of getting away from the planet—perhaps even to another solar system!

Sheer desperation. Sterile immortals of Xlarn supercharging a greatly improved Chronotron. A single emissary, shot through Time's great darkness beyond Beginning . . .

A long wait at the end of time. The remaining immortals wondered at the futility of it all. Theirs was the only life in the universe, in all space and time. Or was it? Would their emissary actually substantiate the theory of a world beyond Beginning?



“EXTRAPOLATION!” exclaimed the nuclear physicist, with an air of strained indulgence. His keen, blue eyes also told young Henry that the scientist was vastly amused. And he resented it. “Sonny, if you’d keep out of unabridged dictionaries until you were of age your mind might have a better chance of catching up to itself *and* the world around you!”

Henry closed his science fiction magazine with as much of an indignant “bang” as was possible with a well-worn pulp and turned his back on the intruder. He tried not to listen to him as he went on arguing with Uncle Andy. He tried to concentrate on the wisps of clouds straggling low over the gray Atlantic Ocean ten thousand feet below. He watched the giant nacelles of the right wing engines as the double-decked strato-cruiser droned monotonously onward toward New York. But he could not shut off his ears . . .

“Really, Dearden, you ought to watch that,” the physicist was saying to the kindly man who had adopted Henry. “A bright, adolescent mind driving itself into the pit of self-delusion! Get him interested in something more realistic than science fiction. Lord knows the world needs some *practical* minds these days!”

“Just now I could quote Henry in a lot of appropriate ways,” Uncle Andy replied. “He’s very seri-

ous about this business of extrapolation. He thinks it is a new perspective, a seventh sense, as it were, that Man ought to develop. Furthermore, as long as you’re interested . . .”

Good old Uncle Andy, thought Henry. A brilliant man, a leading technological specialist, yet as old-fashioned and unassuming as — as — Well, who *was* like Uncle Andy nowadays?

In his mind’s eye he could see him, while he listened to his quiet conversation. Going on forty-five and looking the part, without pretense — graying at the temples, balding, and with a front upper plate in his mouth that was inoffensive but also no secret. He was a little heavy, and as out of condition, physically, as was considered to be average. But he had a good looking, strong, kind face, clear gray eyes and a restful, reassuring manner. The strongest impression one gathered, outside of the fact that his pipe tobacco was abominable, was that he was the turtle that outran the hare. The reliable type, *sans* heroism, fanaticism or hysteria. A swell guy.

But what was that nose-y Doctor Edwards putting in his two cents for? I am *none* of his business! — Henry decided, abruptly.

“Doctor Edwards!” he interrupted, suddenly getting back into the argument, “did it ever occur to you that orthodox scientists are *not* the top of the intellectual pyramid? —

that they are, in fact, the robotic servants of those who *dare* to think *originally?*"

DR. Edwards, also a balding man in his middle forties, but rueful of the fact, managed a thin smile, and Henry perceived that a tender spot had been probed. "I'll overlook a rather unbecoming lack of respect for your elders," retorted the scientist, "but go ahead! As an 'original thinker,' Henry, you should be sufficiently philanthropic to at least drop us groveling orthodox scientists a crumb of pure thought from the overwhelming Cornucopia of your banquet table." His eyes narrowed suddenly with disciplinary sternness. "To put it plainly—"

"You needn't paraphrase the innuendo," Henry cut him off. "And I'll just *toss* you a crumb!"

"Now Henry," chided Uncle Andy, tamping more tobacco into his pipe, "come down off your Pegasus, boy!"

"No, let him go ahead," insisted Edwards. "This will be a good measurement for both of us!"

Three men in the triple seat behind Henry were poking each other. He could hear what they were saying.

"Get this kid!" one of them grunted. He was the slick, heavy-bearded fellow in the powder blue suit, the one with the mean looking scowl caused by a bright scar on one side of his mouth. But he was not being critical. He was genuine-

ly interested.

"Yeah. Smart alec!" a second man muttered.

"There's about eighty people on board," said the third. "Gotta be at least one genius amongst 'em!" That was the big construction stiff from the base where Uncle Andy had worked — in French Morocco.

Henry squared his mental shoulders, stuck out his sixteen-year-old chin and thought—This it!

"All right!" he said aloud, "how about a good hypothesis on novae, arrived at by extrapolation?"

Dr. Edwards slapped his knee in mock enthusiasm. "Just the information the world has been waiting for!" he exclaimed. "Go ahead!"

"I shall attempt to demonstrate that lightwaves produced by any given nova were produced long before their appearance, regardless of astronomical proximity to the observer, and that those waves actually were propagated through Time, along the Fourth Coordinate," Henry began, emphatically.

But there was an interruption.

"Well *really!*" exclaimed the Englishwoman, turning around to stare back at Henry, as if the emotional and physical expenditure required to deliver those two words were sufficient to handle the situation. She turned abruptly to a resumption of her magazine reading, while the plump, middle-aged governess beside her snored softly.

Henry's rather lean face lengthened as he contemplated the back

of her persnickety-looking hat, which he thought was a ridiculous assembly of straw, lace and painted berries. He was blushing slightly as he looked back at Uncle Andy and Dr. Edwards, who wondered if he was going to ignore the lady's protest. When Henry looked at the three men behind him and noticed the all too knowing smirks on their faces, he gave up.

"Aw, skip it!" he said, and he got up, making his way to the aisle.

"Wait, Henry—!" Dr. Edwards started to say.

"Let him go," interrupted Uncle Andy. Those were the last words Henry caught as he hurried away down the aisle toward the stairway leading to the lower deck and the observation lounge and commissary.

It was all on account of Martia, he thought sullenly. She was the daughter of that stuck up English woman. He didn't like people like that, with her airs and the big pretense she put up trying to appear to be still the great lady, with her hatboxes and her governess. Lady Dewitt his foot! Everybody knew that such anachronisms were on their last legs now, with war economies eating away the foundations of landed wealth in England. If Martia weren't merely fifteen years old or so, Henry would have accused Lady Dewitt, in his mind, of coming to New York to catch her daughter a wealthy American husband. Actually, she was just another Eng-

lish evacuee. They were coming to Canada and the States by the tens of thousands, on the eve of war, inasmuch as World War Three's version of the V-2 was expected to be atomic — and England was becoming a glorified foxhole.

MARTIA had seemed to reflect her mother's snobbishness, in a way, but she was strikingly pretty and had the biggest, bluest— However, it wasn't the color of her eyes that had made Henry fall all over himself at the airport in London. He could not define it, but it was a powerful thing that had made him seem not to care what anyone thought. Martia, with her smug chin, pug nose, brunette bangs and patrician attitude, had some indefinable something about her that he *knew* he could never find again—in his entire life. And which was vitally important to *him*, alone.

So from that moment on, many of the passengers had been aware that he was "that way" about the English girl, in spite of the Lady Dewitt's determination to place all possible barriers in his path. She had lost no time in investigating Uncle Andy and discovering that he was, according to the passenger list, a mere construction engineer, and that Henry was an adopted orphan whose genealogy had been lost in one of the many obscurities resulting from World War II.

Heck! — thought Henry. I don't want to *marry* the little snob! I

just wanted to — "Oh, excuse me!" he exclaimed, bumping into someone at the head of the staircase.

He turned around and was surprised to discover that no one was in the aisle. Yet he *had* bumped into someone!

"What for?" asked a young G.I. seated at his elbow.

Henry looked at the friendly, round face of the soldier. He looked at the other soldiers next to him, and at those in the seat ahead of them. They were all looking at him strangely, but not belligerently. He thought: They're coming home from U.N. duty. Troop rotation. Maybe soon they'll have to go back and really use their guns. Uncle Andy said that if by next spring, in 1960 —

A strange ringing sound was in Henry's ears and he felt vaguely airsick.

"I thought I bumped into somebody," he answered, lamely. And he still looked at the soldiers.

There were three who looked like Texans, all buddies, sitting in one seat and playing rummy. Buddies. What buddies had *he* ever had? Never had there been much in common between him and his adolescent associates, either in the war orphanage in France or after Uncle Andy had adopted him. All kids were like — well, in a world apart. Except that girl, Martia. He hadn't even talked to her — and yet the two of them knew something. Something important concerning just

themselves. But what?

"You feel all right, kid?" asked the same soldier again.

*Kid!* Henry was sixteen. The other was only twenty. Where did he get off at—

The ringing in his ears was more insistent. He swayed, dizzily, catching the stair rail for support.

One of the soldiers was a negro, one of those dark ones that almost looked blue-black. But he was the friendliest of all. He even got up to see what he could do.

"Man, you look like you're all mixed up," he said, smiling. "Are you airsick, or constipated?"

The others laughed. Henry blushed again and ran down the narrow, circular staircase, this time actually crashing into a large man in a dark suit who looked like the ads in *Esquire* concerning "Men of Distinction." He had gray at the temples and a ruddy, confident face with penetrating gray eyes.

"Sorry!" exclaimed Henry, and went on. He had recognized the man. He had been pointed out earlier as Congressman Burley, attached to some world-touring congressional committee on something or other. Sure were a lot of big shots on board, he reflected, as he came down onto B deck.

There were many of them here, in the observation lounge — heavily braided officers, some of them high-ranking women in the Service; scientists, international businessmen, newspaper correspondents, enter-

tainers — and foreigners. Henry was especially impressed with the Prince from India who wore thousand dollar turbans and beautiful jewelry. And the Swedish movie star, a beautiful blonde who was anything but dumb. Uncle Andy had been especially interested in her, as well as that young air hostess over there talking to the bald-headed man by the magazine rack.

Suddenly, he saw Martia Dewitt at the commissary counter. There were also two young women with year-old youngsters in their arms, buying suckers to keep them from yowling. But he was interested only in Martia. This time he had caught her alone.

The girl was dressed neatly in a blue, pleated skirt, red jacket and lacy blouse with a velvet tie and a yellow straw hat, red bobby socks and black shoes; but there was a home-spun look about her clothes that hinted at a struggle to maintain appearances.

When Martia spotted him, she lowered her eyes and attempted to hurry past, but he caught her, gently, surprised at his own boldness. "We might as well talk about it now," he said to her quickly. "There won't be another chance."

She held her eyes averted, strained slightly to be released, then relaxed. Her large, clear blue eyes found his and his head swam.

"All right," she answered, simply.

They could not find a seat by

the observation panels, which was to be expected, so they stood near the drinking fountain and looked at each other's feet.

"Then it's true," said Henry. "We have something to talk about, don't we?"

"Yes," she replied, glancing quickly at him and then looking down again.

"Well — what is it?" he asked

"I — I don't know. I thought you—"

Henry swayed, his ears ringing insistently. To his surprise, she grasped his arm seeking support. Her face paled.

This time their eyes really met. It was unnecessary for her to tell him her ears were ringing too. He knew it.

"I'm scared!" she exclaimed. "What is it?"

"It — it isn't quite like ringing," he told her. "It's more like—"

"Like very high flutes going up and down a scale."

"Yeah — in a weird kind of way."

The small tots in the young mothers' arms were shrieking unaccountably now, in spite of the suckers they had been allowed to taste.

Henry looked at them curiously. "Their ears are ringing, too," he said.

Martia did not question how he knew this, because she was also sure the babies were hearing the eerie ringing of the flutes. And that no one else heard — none of the

adults on board . . .

"Your name is Henry," she said, irrelevantly.

"Yes, and yours is Martia. I feel like something is going to happen."

"That's why I'm scared."

She pressed against him and held on to him, shuddering in nameless terror, as hysterical screams and shouts suddenly emanated from A deck, above them. He held her, equally frightened, while the babies screamed — and while the people on B deck began to shout and scurry about in all directions.

"What in God's name—!" a man yelled, getting up from his seat by the windows.

"Something's happened on A deck!" exclaimed the commissary steward.

"What the hell! It's a fight!" shouted a grizzled construction worker.

"Come on!" cried another, excitedly anticipating something to write home about.

"Stay where you are! Don't panic!" shouted a newsman, fumbling frantically with the straps of his camera carrying case.

No one could ascend the spiral staircase because a panic stricken mob from A deck was descending, with the G.I. negro sliding down over their heads. The whites of his eyes glistened in unreasoning terror. Screams of women and the angry shouting and cursing of men filled the staircase, while outside

the muffled roar of the great engines continued unabated.

"All right! All right!" came a tense voice over the P.A. system. "*Passengers will remain seated and refrain from panic. Do not crowd B deck as it changes the load factors and we'll not be able to trim if you don't stay put!*" It seemed to Henry that the announcer wanted to say more but was interrupted by the sudden press of the emergency, whatever it was.

HENRY caught sight of a young woman wearing the uniform of a WAAC nurse sliding down upside down under the feet of the mob, her face bloodied, eyes rolled upward into her head. Either she had fainted or been knocked unconscious. Or she was dead. Grown men, frothing at the mouth and shrieking curses, struck at each other with intent to kill. It was blind panic riding on the animal instinct to survive.

Far from regarding the scene calmly, Henry was visited by an instinctive desire to run through that crowd and find Uncle Andy, who always knew the answer when the chips were down. But the quivering girl beside him detained him, and her presence also made him fight to control an incipient trembling of his chin. It was as though he could smell events and the events there in the lounge had a stench of disaster, of death, of tragic newspaper headlines. You couldn't really smell

such things, but Henry had no name for the strange sense that gave him a vivid impression of the total human element surrounding him.

The air hostess maintained a clear head. She ran to two high-ranking officers, one an Army Colonel and the other a Major of the Air Force.

"Do something!" she exclaimed.

Which was sufficient to arouse them from their momentary paralysis. With a look at each other, a few hurried words and quick nods of agreement, the two officers sprang into action.

"All men on B deck!" yelled the Colonel, suddenly brandishing a Service automatic. "Converge on the staircase and pull the passengers out — women first where possible!"

Henry stared curiously at the gun. He knew it did not contain ammunition. Although this ship was a MATS charter, ammunition was not allowed for sidearms on such flights.

The Major and two Army non-coms were already at the staircase, working fast.

"Come down single file, those of you on the staircase!" yelled the Major. "All others remain on A deck! No fighting, you! Move!" He was also waving a gun in the air.

When one man struck out wildly at another who was in his way, the Major reached up and hit him over the head with his weapon — under the sudden brilliance of the newsman's flash bulb. The man

slumped, and a number of B deck men heaved at him, pulling him through.

Henry wondered if Uncle Andy was playing it safe, staying in his seat. Couldn't be a fire. No smoke. Something much different, more dangerous, he sensed. He recalled the ringing in his and Martia's ears. Then he also remembered having bumped into someone in the aisle upstairs — someone that he could not see . . . A prickly sensation crept down his spine.

They had the unconscious WAAC nurse stretched out on a seat under the observation windows. The air hostess was calling to the commissary steward to break out the first aid supplies, and the Swedish actress ran to get them for her. The Indian Prince had lost his turban and, being quite bald, was trying to wrap it around his head again, while his eyes stared in fright at the milling crowd and he cowered in the farthest corner muttering prayers in Hindustani.

"What the hell's happening up there?" asked the Major of one male passenger from A deck who seemed to be more rational. Henry remembered that this was the scar-faced man who had sat behind him and Uncle Andy. On his hardened face was an expression of deep concern, and his forehead glistened with sweat.

"It's a — a man," he stammered.

"A man! Well what the—"

"A monster!" cried a woman, her

hair disheveled, her dress and shoes gone and her petticoat half ripped off. "Oh God help us!"

"Mother!" shrieked Martia, suddenly. She broke away from Henry and ran toward the crowd at the staircase.

Henry ran after her and caught her by the wrist. "You'll get yourself killed trying to get up there!" he yelled at her. "Stay here!"

"Mother!" she cried out again, sobbing hysterically and struggling frantically to break away from him.

"Shush, girl!" commanded the Colonel. The P.T. speaker was blaring.

*"This is co-pilot Nelson speaking for Captain Merman,"* came the same, tense, male voice they had heard previously. *"All passengers are to remain where they are. There is nothing wrong with the ship, except we've got to keep trimming against that load in the lounge. I repeat, there is nothing wrong with the ship. B deck passengers are advised that we have been boarded, in some undetermined way, by a sort of — man. He has made no move to harm anyone although he appears to be armed. Captain Merman is trying to communicate with him. In the meantime you are advised that we are under emergency conditions affecting the rules of international travel. The Captain's orders will be followed to the letter, by all nationalities represented on*

*board, regardless of rank or position. I repeat, this is an emergency. But there will be no panic. Violators will be placed under arrest by any male member of the crew or by any male commissioned personnel on board. All male commissioned military personnel in the service of the government of the United States are hereby deputized to make arrests and hold in custody any offender. That is all. Stand by!"*

The two small children, Henry noted, were still crying, uncontrollably.

"Vot does he mean?" queried a bearded Russian at Henry's elbow. "Vot iss a sort of man?" It was a rhetorical question, with no answer expected.

But Henry said, "Well, the Captain is *trying* to communicate with him. That would mean he does not speak our language, perhaps none of the languages represented on board. It would mean he is not equipped with equivalent articulatory organs." Several adults near Henry turned their attention upon him. The negro G.I., whose bulging eyes had been staring alternately at the staircase and the Indian Prince, now turned, trembling, to gaze upon this new wonder. And Henry continued. "The co-pilot said he *appears* to be armed. This means he carries some apparatus on him which is unrelated to current technology. That this creature represents an alien intelligence and is capitalizing on the utilization



of an alien science is further demonstrated by his having made an appearance on board a transoceanic stratoliner in mid-flight. Therefore, it is reasonable to conclude that we have with us either an extra-terrestrial or a time-traveling superman out of some future age — or both."

"*Proklaty!*" ejaculated the Russian. "*Ya nye ponye*—" He adjusted a pair of heavy-lensed spectacles and stared at Henry in myopic amazement. "I haf turned on a walkie-talking!"

"Ye gods!" exclaimed an American businessman, a fat man with a florid, sweating face, blue-veined jowls and pale yellow hair that strove unsuccessfully to cover a sunburned scalp. "Here's a quiz kid! Let *him* talk to the monster!"

"Poppycock!" snorted a lean, tweedy Englishman in his early forties. "The child is a precocious egotist. This is a serious matter! It is certainly not a time for youngsters to be heard at all — particularly when they appear to be addicted to the utterly fantastic! Extra-terrestrial, indeed! My poor, misguided child," he said to Henry, "you must face reality! This is either some manifestation of a Communist plot or — what would be worse — a perverted form of American advertising that has come close to endangering the lives of all of us! A rank publicity stunt! A hoax! A criminal *adulteration* of propriety!"

"What's immorality got to do

with it?" queried the negro, fearfully. "Ah don't care if dis kid is a Republican or a vampire. Ah's worried about dat *In-Between* dey got upstairs!"

"Henry!" Martia, huddling close in the protective circle of his arm, was whispering to him. "I think the same as you!" She was trembling.

By this time, the Colonel, the Major, the non-coms and the air-hostess, with the help of the commissary steward and the Swedish actress, had restored some semblance of order — at gunpoint. Over two dozen cowering, babbling, questioning passengers were lined up along both sides of the observation lounge. The newsman was still taking flash-photos. The staircase was deserted, because the Major stood there threatening to shoot any unauthorized persons attempting to get down to B deck. Henry wondered how many realized the gun was not loaded.

The now all important P.A. system sputtered, and all faces turned toward it in nervous anticipation. The co-pilot's voice came slowly and quietly now, but tensely. "*Everybody remain exactly where you are. The — stranger — is moving down the aisle.*"

Someone in the observation lounge started to cry out in alarm — one of the women carrying a baby — but the Colonel said, "Quiet!" so vehemently that she stopped,

staring at the staircase with round glassy eyes.

*"Attention on B deck!"* came another voice over the P.A. speaker. *"This is Captain Merman. I believe Colonel Rogers is among you. If so or in his absence if there is any other commissioned member of the Service present, you will immediately move all women and children out of harm's way and organize the men to take up a position which will enable you to ambush the intruder! He will not identify himself and I consider him to be dangerous. By your combined efforts you are authorized and directed to capture him, dead or alive. This is an official order. Passengers are reminded that disobeying an order at this time will be mutinous and subject to arrest and imprisonment. Stand by!"*

This was followed by general silence. Henry and Martia listened for sounds of activity from A deck. Had they heard screams or the sound of mortal conflict above them they could not have been more terrified than they were by this absence of any noise other than the muffled roar of the engines outside. It was as though A deck were totally devoid of human occupants and the ship were being piloted by phantoms.

Colonel Rogers silently motioned to everybody, herding the women and children over to one side of the lounge, next to the drinking fountain where Henry and Martia

stood. The Major and the non-coms lined up the men. There were whispered arguments.

"What the hell does he think he's doing?"

"Yeah, there's more guys on A deck! Why don't they pile him?"

Some of the men, by their facial expression and obvious emotional condition, were considered inadequate for the task before them and were excused. The scar-faced man, however, quietly followed instructions. Henry wanted to go to him and ask him about Uncle Andy, but he could no longer move against the press of the crowd.

*"He has stopped now at the head of the staircase,"* Captain Merman announced in a low tone. *"He is looking down into the lounge."*

Men and women pressed closely against the two adolescents. Henry could sense their accumulated tenseness. He could hear grown men panting and he could observe the dryness of their tightly compressed lips, the animal-like flaring of nostrils, the hunted look in their staring eyes. He saw one woman grip her husband's hand until he winced. Martia pressed her face against his shoulder and would not look at the staircase.

They waited. And Henry watched the Major.

He was a short, stockily built man with a clear, youthful face and brown, wavy hair. On his chest were campaign ribbons and one small

medal of some kind. Henry saw his Adam's apple move as he swallowed nervously. His blue-grey eyes never wavered from the staircase.

The scar-faced man stood slightly apart from the crowd, watching the stairs with a quiet, expressionless intentness. About a dozen men waited tensely on either side of the stairs, trying to remain out of a direct line of sight from above.

"*He's coming down!*" said Captain Merman.

There was an audible drawing of breaths as they saw the alien intruder descend the stairs. He came down to the second step from the bottom and stood there surveying the scene before him.

He was taller than men, by about a head. His shoulders, arms and musculature were not human. He was almost four feet across his sloping shoulders, with ponderous arms and six-fingered hands that reached below his thick knees. There was a thumb, in addition to the taloned fingers, a prehensile, calloused extension of the heel of the hand. A second set of three, prehensile appendages writhed slowly about just above his multi-jointed wrists. His large, almost circular chest was split by a multiple lipped orifice that slowly opened and closed like a sea anemone as he breathed. He wore only a meager harness and loin cloth, the plastic-like straps supporting a heavy instrument box at his waist and a pack of apparatus on his back. His

skin was leathery, almost brittle appearing, as though he were partially exoskeletal, and of mottled colors ranging from dark red to purple, like a mass of birth-marks that left no room for normal pigment. His face was small, chinless and devoid of nose or nostrils, but he had a round mouth the lips of which were like the beak of a blowfish. His cranium was large; hairless, and heavily veined. Under absurdly accentuated, hairless brows, a single, monstrous insect's eye with a thousand gleaming facets rotated about, examining them balefully.

Martia could not see the alien. Henry could. She felt him shudder.

Three women quietly passed out, but no one paid them any attention. Colonel Rogers and the Major stood there looking back at the creature in the same attitude of momentary shock paralysis as the others. The non-com soldiers and male passengers constituting the ambush on either side of the staircase were all white-faced, staring. "Scarface" stood apart, more or less facing the intruder.

Then — the alien spoke. The little beaks of his mouth moved, and a rather high-pitched voice spoke, laboriously, in a language which was guttural, vaguely familiar, but nonetheless incomprehensible.

No one moved, but the men tensed, as though for action.

Henry recognized the menace of this creature, but he could not

refrain from reflecting, during those brief, weirdly timeless seconds of inactivity, that to communicate with it might be worth a thousand Rosetta Stones. A single, intelligible conversation, and Man might conquer the stars! But this was the Unknown. Man, in his egotism, abhorred the Unknown as Nature abhorred a vacuum. Man had to reduce the Unknown to the level of his own understanding. "The only good Injun is a dead one!" This superman from out of space or time, this harbinger of wonders yet to be discovered, this mute, alien vessel of perhaps incalculable knowledge — was suspect, and condemned to be taken, dead or alive. Henry was aware of no sympathetic sentiments around him. He knew that the mass reaction was for violence. The judgment: Death!

Suddenly, the newsman took a picture and the flash bulb caused the alien to start and move one of his amazingly dextrous hands toward the control box at his waist.

The two babies screamed, and the stranger turned his cyclopean eye upon them for the first time. He moved down to the floor and started toward them.

It was then that Scarface whipped out a gun and fired, point blank. The loud report in that tensely silent place stimulated involuntary muscular reactions and the crowd seemed to jump as one body.

The bullet made a round, neat hole to the right of the chest ori-

fice, and the alien stopped. Nobody wondered why Scarface happened to be carrying a loaded gun. They merely sensed relief when he fired the shot. A known element had entered the picture. Man had met the Unknown with a gun, and the gun could do harm. It was effective.

The alien looked at Scarface briefly, then turned dials at his waist, even as Scarface pumped three more shots into him in very rapid succession.

Nobody was quite sure of what happened after that. Everyone's vision blurred. There was a tumultuous ringing in the ears, a giddiness, and a tendency to black out.

When their vision cleared, the alien had disappeared. And with him the two babies . . .

**H**ENRY, Uncle Andy, Dr. Edwards, Scarface, the G.I. negro and the Swedish actress were all shoulder to shoulder in the lounge, looking down at the world.

Martia had been "rescued" by her mother, the Lady Dewitt, and the governess, whose dough-like face had acquired red emotional splotches similar to hives.

First aid was being administered to the injured and the hysterical—including the two mothers whose babies had been stolen.

In spite of the overwhelming enigma below him, where the Atlantic Ocean should have been, Henry kept remembering Martia — the

look she had given him when she had started back to A deck with her mother and the governess. Her eyes had revealed a composite expression of sadness, puzzlement and urgency. With them she had transmitted a message: *Something unknown binds us together. I will see you again.*

More important than that, it seemed to be imperative that he discover *what* it was that bound them together. Just the two of them. No one else in the world.

Why? Why? *Why!*

"Well, Henry," said Uncle Andy, whose pipe had gone out, "after all that's happened, and in view of the landscape below us, I imagine you are about ready to extrapolate."

"He's got company!" ejaculated the negro G.I. "Ah's about ready to lose control, myself! Dat Monster Man done burned up mah nervous system, but dis here country we's flyin' over is gonna make me exasperate all over if somebody don't tell me where we is at!"

Dr. Edwards was not concerned with him, just now, Henry noted. Instead, he studied the unknown country below them — and the peculiar sky — as though orthodox authority were at a loss for an opinion. The Swedish actress, known by the name of Valerie Roagland, looked at Henry, her brilliantly blue eyes searching him curiously.

"When will they tell us?" she asked, with just the pleasant trace of a liquid accent.

"I don't think the Captain or the Navigator are going to be able to come up with much," said Uncle Andy, noting with appreciation that Valerie Roagland's hair was naturally blond and wavy. "Unless they are equipped with a crystal ball."

"What I'd like to know," said Dr. Edwards, "is *how* this happened. A weird creature like that, suddenly appearing on board and stealing two babies, then disappearing into thin air. And when it's all over—" He shrugged and pointed below.

Henry looked again at the terrain over which they were flying. The ship was in descent, and their present altitude of some three thousand feet gave him a close view.

DISTANT seas, land locked tropical harbors, islands, and the great land mass below with its rivers and lakes and jungles and very low, pagan looking hills. Here below them was an apparently uninhabited Eden — a Paradise that continued endlessly. No ship, sailboat or canoe could be discerned on any visible body of water. No city, town or village. No highways, country roads or footpaths. There were only brilliant flowers, on the ground and in the trees, and a few birds.

Nothing more — except the sky.

The sky was blue, but without a sun, although the brilliance of the day was equivalent to that of high noon. It was as though a curtain had been drawn across the heavens — as though they were adventur-

ing within a shell that encircled the world.

"The absence of the sun," said Henry, "is one basis for conjecture. The absence of inhabitants is another. But the last announcement they made over the P.A. system gives us the most conclusive evidence of all."

Dr. Edwards looked at him quickly. "That announcement merely revealed the fact that no radio contact has been made with anyone," he said. "What does it prove?"

"It was not announced that the radio is not functioning properly," replied Henry. "Given a radio that is in working order, and no reception; given a primitive looking country such as this one below us, with no signs of inhabitants, plus a bright blue sky without a sun — and the answer is obvious."

"I wish it were as obvious to me," said Valerie Roagland. "What do you make of it, Henry? What *is* the answer?"

"Man, you's got more complications!" protested the negro G.I. "Come on! It's a impossibility to scare me any futher, 'cause I got goose pimples clear out on my fingernails! Let's have it!"

Henry looked expressionlessly through the observation panels and wondered, as he had wondered all his life, how he knew, *a priori*, what it took those around him so long to figure out.

"This is another world," he said. "If it is not another planet—"

"Oh, Henry, for the love of God!" exclaimed Dr. Edwards. "You and your extrapolations! How could this be another planet? What inhabitable planet would not reveal a sun in its sky? And how could we be transported there in the twinkling of an eye?"

"The planet, Venus, is surrounded by clouds of some sort," said Henry. "We have never seen its surface. Perhaps it would be Nature's way to protect such a world from the brightness and heat of a nearer sun by surrounding it with some sort of protective layer that only *looks* like a sky. But I don't think this is Venus."

"Well, that's very nice to know," said Dr. Edwards, sarcastically.

"What *do* you think it is, Henry?" asked Uncle Andy, puffing again at his pipe.

"Earth — incalculably removed into the distant future. We have been hurled into future Time."

Dr. Edwards snorted, straightened up, and left the group without a word.

"Look at the low hills," said Henry to the others. "We've been flying over this country for several hours. Here we have a small continent, a comparatively major land mass—but no mountains. That would be indicative of great geologic age. Furthermore, you will note that the islands we saw, though tropical, are not the result of coral growth. They are the tops of low hills. At one time this was

a greater land mass, but it has since been inundated."

The P. A. system blared. "*All passengers and crew, prepare for landing . . .*"

"Say, Henry," interposed Scarface for the first time, "how did we get here?"

"The—alien—took himself back to where he came from, along with the two babies. I believe he made a mistake and transported us, too."

Scarface raised one black brow quizzically. "Then you mean—we have come to the place where that geek went to with the kids?"

"Perhaps. But if we followed him accidentally through time we might have been dropped off somewhere along the Continuum, either prior to his own time or far beyond his era."

Scarface looked at Valerie Roagland and Uncle Andy. They expected him to grin in amusement, but he did not.

"We better take seats," he said. "I think I need one, landing or no landing."

Valerie Roagland cornered Uncle Andy and flashed him a smile that brought him to a staggering halt. "This is all a little beyond me," she said. "What do *you* think has happened?"

He looked at her in silence a moment before answering. Then he gently patted her shapely shoulder. "The most practical thing I can say," he answered, "is to relax. No matter what has happened—we're here. Let's face it and wait for de-

velopments."

Suddenly she tucked her arm in his. He looked down at her arm, then into her eyes. After that, they walked up to A deck together.

Henry, following them, knew the answer. Far from being romance, it was an expression of the present situation. They were confronted with the Unknown. Their own world with its mores, complexities and inhibitions was behind them. Beneath that veneer, in real people, lay a human frankness, and a gregarious instinct. If rough waters lay ahead, Valerie Roagland preferred to have a man like Uncle Andy around. No strings. No innuendos.

But what lay beneath the civilized veneers of other people on board?

Take Scarface, for example. Why was he carrying a loaded gun?

"**W**ELL, it didn't take us long, did it?" Uncle Andy cast his line once more into the swelling waves and squinted against the eternal light of day.

"What do you mean?" queried Henry. His shoes were off and he wriggled his toes in the warm light of the sky as he sat precariously on the edge of the great rock that jutted out from the land ten feet above the sea. He looked at Uncle Andy's fishing rod and thought: That's all we got out of the survival gear. Everybody just *grabbed*.

"I mean—" Uncle Andy wound in fast. "It's only been two weeks

since our crash landing, and our little human colony has divided itself into separate groups." The fish hook was empty—of fish, and of bait.

Henry handed him another "bush worm"—a two-inch long greenish thing with tentacles all over it. It squirmed but was harmless otherwise.

"It's like a glass jar they showed us once at the orphanage," he answered. "There were big pebbles, little pebbles, and sand. You shook the jar awhile and pretty soon you had each size and type seeking its own level. That's like people."

Uncle Andy smiled around the edges of his pipe stem and cast out again, with the fresh bait. "You always hit the nail on the head, Henry. You're an unusual human being. I wish I knew more about your actual parentage. They told me a story about you. You were a year old child when they found you naked on the Normandie beach. You're probably French, all right. But who your parents were will probably never be known—especially now."

"And you skip around a lot," retorted Henry. "We were talking about the people back at the camp." He had built up a wall of inhibition against the pain of not knowing about his parents. He resented any probing into that isolated cyst of longing.

"Yes, I know." The line was

taut now, and Uncle Andy was fighting a catch. "Take the English clan—that Cyril Rollins or whatever his name is, and your Lady Dewitt and the governess and the two Crispin sisters and that old retired sea captain, Langham. Colonization is a tradition with them. By God, if they had a flag they'd unfurl it in the name of the Queen!

They can't quite swallow the concept of complete severance with the world they knew. It's a sort of mental defense mechanism, I guess. And no criticism, either. Merely a sign of their own particular character as a people. But that's just an example of the grouping that's going on."

The catch came in—a two foot lizard, glaring scarlet with blue and yellow gills and black eyes that pierced one with a deadly stare of murderous hate.

"Hm-m-m. That biologist, Doctor Singer, will have to see this." Uncle Andy held it beneath his foot studying it. "This certainly is a different type of world. Entirely different evolution. All the fauna and flora we've seen yet are different than anything we've known. Hundreds of millions of years—maybe much more. I'd swear we're still on Earth. It *feels* like Earth. But what happened to our own time? Did the world start over again, somewhat unthinkably long ago? Where are we? At the dawn or at the end of Creation?"

Henry reflected that there were



five mental cases back in camp—all raving idiots. They, too, had tried to find an answer, but their minds were not as well balanced as others. He pinned his faith on minds like Uncle Andy, his own—and Martia's. He couldn't see Martia yet—not alone, that is. Sooner or later, though, after the Lady Dewitt extracted herself from her delusions—

"You're talking to yourself," he accused. "We were discussing the people. One group I don't like is that Tommy Weston gang. They are the crude pebbles in the glass jar—and they are trouble makers. The incident about the women last night is just one indication of what's ahead. Here we are in Paradise and some are reverting to animals already."

Night was only an arbitrary period of rest. In this world there was no actual night. Daylight apparently continued forever.

"Look!" exclaimed Uncle Andy. "Here comes Valerie and Pee Bee!"

HENRY turned in time to see the Swedish actress and the negro G. I. climbing up the rock behind them. Pee Bee, the negro, carried a bonafide picnic basket under his arm. The basket seemed incongruous, but Henry knew it was one of half a dozen that had been woven recently by several women who had found an unlimited supply of rushes for the purpose. There was a medical doctor in camp who had told

everyone they had better keep busy and be industrious if they wanted to avoid cracking up. The baskets were one of the results of his advice.

Pee Bee, who had been nick-named "Powder Blue," or P. B., by his fellow servicemen, flashed them a toothy smile and helped Valerie up the incline of the rock.

"We figured you fishermen would be starvin' for lack of fish," he called out, "so we done brought you all a lunch!"

"K-rations again," put in Valerie, smiling at both of them. "They found some more near the wreckage. But they really are the last. Good Heavens! What is that." She pointed at the scarlet lizard under Uncle Andy's foot.

"That," he answered, "is *lacerta litoralis satanus*, or the swimming devil lizard."

Pee Bee's eyes bugged out. "Ah got just one question. Do we eat *it*, or does it eat *us*?"

Everybody laughed, and Uncle Andy did not try to avoid taking in all of Valerie with his eyes. She wore light blue slacks, beach sandals and a white shirt, the tails of which were tied in a knot under her breasts, making it an appropriate midriff outfit. Her voluminous blond hair floated cleanly in the salty breeze and her face and neck were already deeply tanned. She looked up at him and caught his eyes and their smiles faded—slowly.

Words between them would have

been superfluous. Inevitably, their companionship in this lost world had developed into a much closer relationship.

The four of them sat there on the rock, bare legs dangling over, and ate K-rations. In the reassuring warmth and sunlight before the comprehensible aspect of the ageless sea, they felt little need for conversation. They were content with the awareness of *not* being alone.

Henry watched a printed wrapping from the K-rations float on the waves below, and he thought it far more incongruous than the picnic basket. K-rations—a million years removed from their source. Along these shores were empty tin cans and bottles and old newspapers and magazines lying among the seaweeds and flotsam.

*Man* had come to Paradise . . .

**A**FTER lunch they fell into the usual discussion. Where were they? How had they come here? What was the alien's purpose of taking the two babies? Was the alien here, in this world, or in some other one? What would be the possibilities of exploring this world and what might they discover—if anything? Were they doomed to stay here forever?

Uncle Andy expressed the opinion that, until something better developed, it would be the sanest course to get their little colony organized under a recognizable form of government. Dwellings had to

be built. Sources of food had to be secured. Exploration parties must be sent out.

"In substance," he said, "that's what the big meeting tonight is all about. We have to get organized and come to decisions regarding the future."

"Look!" said Henry. "There's Tommy Weston and some of his gang." He pointed back toward the jungle.

All four of them looked shoreward and discerned six bare-chested men standing there about a hundred feet from them, just under the shade of the flowering trees. Four of them were construction men, led by the big man who had sat with Scarface in the seat behind Henry, Uncle Andy and Dr. Edwards back when—things were normal. This two hundred and forty pound package of trouble was Tommy Weston, heavy chested, big fisted, tattooed, square jawed, bewhiskered, and with a brooding tawny-eyed stare. His crinkly hair, on his head, chest and brawny arms, was a dark, rusty red. And he was heavily freckled.

He stood there talking to his men and gesticulating toward the group on the rock. Henry recognized two of the men as the only two cooks belonging to the camp. One was an ugly hulk of a man who in his youth might have been more than a match for Weston. He was a garrulous, argumentative Pole, pale-faced, perspiring, and wearing a battered, black felt hat. The other

was young, probably only twenty, but squarely built and already notoriously hot-tempered, having been in three fistfights since the crash landing. His hair and lashes were pure white. Hence the obvious name, Whitey.

"They're coming up here," said Valerie. "I wish they wouldn't. It was so peaceful."

"Relax, honey," Uncle Andy replied. "Maybe they only want to borrow my fishing gear."

"Man, de only thing dat big boy wants to borrow 'round here is trouble!" put in Pee Bee. "Ah wish ah was back home playin' pool on Central Avenue now!"

Henry merely watched the men climb the rock. He saw their ugly grins as they looked at Valerie, and he thought of the separation of the sand and pebbles in the jar again. Uncle Andy got to his feet and held up the devil lizard for them to see. It was a disarming neighborly gesture, but Henry felt it was somehow pathetic. He had a distinct feeling of being cornered. He knew Uncle Andy felt that, too, but he didn't show it.

CAMP was almost a mile distant and completely out of sight behind two jungle covered headlands. The six men came up onto the rock and stood there grinning at them.

"It probably isn't even edible," said Uncle Andy, still referring to the devil lizard. "But this sea is teeming with life."

Tommy Weston looked down at Henry and saw his box of worms. "You ain't doin' so hot, then," he answered. "Lemme try that pole. Gimme some of them worms, Henry."

Both Uncle Andy and Henry complied, while Valerie kept very much to herself. She still sat on the edge of the rock, with her back toward them, and looked down into the swirling water. Pee Bee was a powder blue study in self-effacement. He kept his eyes on the water as though he wished he were a fish.

Weston hooked on his bait and cast far out. "We been makin' the rounds," he said. "We're checkin' up on everybody's ideas about the meeting tonight."

"Well, now, that's a pretty sure sign we're all going to survive," remarked Uncle Andy, but not as naively as he sounded. "I didn't know anyone was actively concerned about it. I'm glad you fellows think the meeting is that important."

"Sure it's important!" exclaimed the big, Polish cook with the felt hat. "Vot you t'ink ve goink around for a walk only for our healt'?"

"Shut up, Sceranka!" said Weston, reeling in the line. "You see, we don't like the set-up. There's too many government boys who think naturally they got the say-so around here. They still recognize Captain Merman as the head man. And it seems they sort of got things set up

their own way." The other five men, if they were not watching Valerie, were watching Uncle Andy for his reactions as Weston spoke.

The fishline came in empty. Weston baited again.

"I can see your point," said Uncle Andy. "You favor a more democratic method of setting up the colony, now that the emergency is over and we are peacefully established on land. The rules governing international flights do not apply here. Since there is no government, or any contact with one, the people must elect one. Is that what you're getting at?"

Weston looked at him in surprise. "Yeah! That's the idea!" he exclaimed. "The democratic system!"

But Uncle Andy and Henry did not like the grins on the other men's faces.

"Now take me, for instance!" Weston continued, casting out his line again. "I'm up for election!"

This time, Valerie had to turn and stare at him in astonishment. He looked down at her as he reeled in the line and gave her a smile that revealed gold-capped teeth.

"What's the matter, beautiful? Wouldn't I make a good candidate? I got a platform already. No red tape. No promises. And no taxes. Just do as I say and we'll all get along."

"Obviously," said Uncle Andy, "that's a brand of politics that belongs to gangsters. What can you

possibly hope to gain even if you are the Boss of this outfit?"

THE hook came in empty, so Weston threw the pole down on the rock. He faced Uncle Andy and gave him that twany-eyed, brooding look of his. "I got this to gain," he said. "None of us knows what's gonna happen. Maybe our chances of gettin' back to civilization are slim. But if things get tough I ain't going to be breakin' my back under nobody else's whip. I don't go for this gold braid and paper baloney. I think half the camp is made up of a helpless mess of blubber as far as *men* go. Of course, as far as the women go we don't mind them bein' helpless! We'll take care of them, but first they gotta come down off their pedestals and get some sense into 'em." He and all his men looked at Valerie. "We might never get back home," he said, pointedly, "and in that case things have got to be a lot different around here. And me and my boys have just got the guts to make the necessary changes!"

Uncle Andy stiffened, but he held his temper. "Tommy," he said, "what is it you want? How does this visit of yours apply to the meeting tonight?"

"We're going to force the issue on voting in a new leader. I'll be a candidate. If you know what's good for you, you'll vote for *me*!"

Uncle Andy wanted to ask him why they should vote at all as long

as Weston had decided how the voting was going to go, but instead he said, "How about giving us time to consider it? Until tonight."

"Sure! Just so you decide by tonight. You can't vote before then!"

"Yeah but what about the dame?" Whitey blurted out. "You know what you said."

Instinctively, Valerie sprang to her feet and drew close to Uncle Andy. Just as instinctively, he put an arm around her, protectively.

Tommy Weston hooked his thumbs into his pants and drew close to Uncle Andy. "Now there's another point I'd like to bring up," he said. "Just who elected you the fair haired boy with blondie, here? You may have to get used to some different ideas before long."

"So it might as well be now!" put in Whitey, coming shoulder to shoulder with Weston.

The other four men closed in also. The big Pole with the hat was sweating more profusely now, and his eyes grew large as he stared at Valerie.

"So we've come to this," said Uncle Andy, actually stalling for time.

"Let's face it!" exclaimed Weston. "We always *been* here!"

"Yes," Henry broke in. "You're right! There was a thin, fake covering called civilization, once. But now at the end of time the covering comes off and we find nothing has changed since the Stone Age!"

Tommy Weston sneered. "So the

young genius has to put his two-bits in, too! Well, boys, the conference is over!" He reached out for Valerie's shirt, just as Pee Bee suddenly got to his feet in a crouching position, ready to uncoil.

Uncle Andy's fists were coming up when another man shouldered his way between the construction men. Action froze on all sides as they looked at the newcomer. He stood there in shirt, trousers and tan sport shoes. It was Scarface, wearing a very handy looking shoulder holster. From the holster, the butt of a black automatic protruded.

"Any trouble up here?" he queried, nonchalantly, as though he were asking if the fish were biting.

TOMMY Weston's already tanned face darkened, as did Whitey's. The other men backed away, slightly. In addition to having a respect for the gun, they respected the man. None of them knew who Scarface was, actually, but they remembered he had had the nerve to shoot it out with the alien.

"So the little gun boy is going to take sides!" sneered Weston.

Scarface raised his brows and spoke unsmilingly through his teeth. "I've got news for you," he said. "As a trouble maker you're an amateur. I'm professional, but please don't ask for a demonstration today. Now I want all you hairy-chested little girls to climb back on your kiddy cars and toddle home, because there's no more Mickey Mouse to-

day."

"If you didn't have that goddam gun I'd swedge your sassy yap shut!" threatened Weston, looming over him and fuming.

Scarface's eyes flashed. "I said get the hell out of here!"

Weston brought himself under control and tried another tack. "What's in this for you, Scarface?" he asked. "You don't strike me as the Sunday School type. You know what the score is around here. So why don't you put in with us or sit out?"

"Your business and what you do is none of *my* business," said Scarface, "as long as you leave my friends alone. These are my friends, so lay off!"

"Look out!" screamed Valerie, and Uncle Andy jerked Scarface out of the way just in time to avoid Whitey's lunge.

Whitey lunged again, for the gun, and as Scarface turned toward him, Weston threw an arm around his neck that looked like the root of an oak tree. Scarface kicked out at Whitey, making him lose his balance, and Pee Bee bowed his back as Whitey went over him. When Pee Bee straightened up, two things happened. His head collided solidly with the big Pole's chin, knocking him out, and Whitey sailed beautifully into the crashing waves below. His terrified yell was drowned by foaming seawater. Simultaneously, Uncle Andy snatched the gun from Scarface just as the latter

broke loose by scraping his heels down Weston's shins, almost breaking his arches, and at the same time nearly pulling the other's ears off.

Weston broke free of the ear grip while Uncle Andy held the other men at bay. As Scarface turned on Weston, the latter swung at him ponderously. Scarface ducked and gave him a swift jab into the stomach. As Weston doubled, he received a two-fisted uppercut, and as he toppled he was aided on his way by a double blow across the left temple. He came down like a brick chimney and lay there in a heap.

Pee Bee stood there rubbing his head and looking down at the prostrate figure of the Polish cook.

"Get Whitey!" cried one of the construction men, pointing at the ocean. "He'll drown!"

While Uncle Andy still held them at bay, they all looked at the man in the water. Whitey was screaming and flailing wildly about, while the undertow and the incoming waves alternately dragged him outward and dashed him against the rocks.

"What's the matter?" asked Scarface, rubbing his knuckles. "Can't he swim?"

"He can swim," said the same man, "but something's got him!"

As they watched, the water darkened around Whitey.

"It's blood!" cried Valerie. "Oh my God, the poor man!"

"Look!" cried Henry. "Those

are devil lizards! Hundreds of them!"

LIKE a voracious swarm of piranhas, the scarlet little monsters converged on Whitey and tore him apart. As the blood filled the water, other "things" were attracted. There were glimpses of finned, serpentine backs and vast, amorphous shadows beneath the churning waves. To those who watched, the eternal light above them seemed deceptive. Subjectively, they were aware of the dark Unknown. The very dark *Unknown*.

*Where were they?*

One of the construction men ran away screaming. Pee Bee, carrying the lunch basket, took Henry's arm and also started to lead the way, gently but firmly. Uncle Andy handed the gun back to Scarface. He led Valerie down the rock, wordlessly. And Scarface stood there looking back at the bloodied water for a full minute.

Then he followed the others. Weston and Sceranka, he decided, would have to come by themselves and find their own way back to camp.

The fishing pole lay there, abandoned . . .

The camp was similar, in effect to a military beachhead prior to organization. There was one tent, salvaged from the survival gear that the plane carried. This was used by the women for the purpose of changing their clothes, as well as a sort of "safety deposit vault" for valu-

able articles such as the ship's log, medicinal supplies and various instruments—plus short wave sending and receiving gear, now quite useless owing to a lack of power source and an absence of activity on the wave bands.

Beyond the tent lay confusion. Small huts constructed of branches and giant leaves, or square areas enclosed by sheets or towels, suspended on crude frameworks rigged together with poles. Here and there a more presentable structure of branches indicated the work of construction men. Between these were scattered both small and large heaps of luggage and personal belongings—suitcases, pullmans, hatboxes, overnight bags, small trunks, packing cases—even an aluminum cage in which reposed a bewildered Pekingese dog. A very lonely dog. The only dog in the universe.

Inevitably, there were clotheslines displaying underwear, shirts, socks, silk stockings, bras—and a man's pair of black silk monogrammed pajamas. These latter belonged to the Englishman, Sir Cyril Rollins. And there was a hammock strung between two straight-boled trees without leaves which bore a weird fruit that looked like pomegranates. The hammock was shared by the three soldiers from Texas. Just now the hammock was empty except for a ukelele and a million year old copy of Life Magazine.

Farther up the endless beach was the plane, lying crumpled on its

belly, with wings drooping dejectedly into the sand and water. One of the landing gears had burst up through a nacelle. The great, swift, mechanical bird of another age was a useless thing—and a painful reminder of what once was their own familiar world.

Altogether there were in camp sixty males and twenty-four females, representing three races and eight nationalities. A cross section of the human race. Seemingly, all there was left of it.

WHEN Henry returned with the others to camp, Martia was the first to greet him. She had suddenly lost the last vestige of her patrician affectations, because she ran to him abruptly. Or rather, their thoughts seemed to meet between them even before they drew together. He squeezed her hand warmly as she drew him to one side, excitedly.

"Mother is lost!" she exclaimed. Her eyes were slightly reddened from crying.

"Lost! How do you know?"

"She and Sir Rollins and that Mr. Langham and the Crispin sisters and those two mothers who lost their babies went exploring for spring water. They've been gone all day and nobody can find them! Henry, I'm so worried! Can you speak to your Uncle and ask him to organize a real search party. There's no night here. We can start right away!"

"But the meeting—"

"Please!" she insisted.

"What I mean is, no search party can be organized during the big meeting, and that's about ready to get under way—after everybody eats supper." They could see the fires along the beach where men and women were cooking. Either they were cooking small game caught in traps or certain species of edible crustacea, or a potato-like fruit that was abundant in this region. The food from the plane was long gone. "Why doesn't your governess do something about it? What does she think?"

"Emily? She made a few soldier boys go with her to search—those three Texas boys—and I think three of those WAACs went along. But they've disappeared, too!"

"All right," said Henry. "Let's go see Uncle Andy."

They found him, with Valerie Roagland and the air hostess, Peggy Hollenbeck, engaged in a group discussion that included Captain Merman, several high-ranking U. S. Army officers and the five congressmen led by Burley. Also, there were a few businessmen and scientists present, including Dr. Edwards. Most of them stood around a charcoal fire boiling small chunks of meat on long wires and drinking "Beachcomber's Tea," made from the leaves of a giant vine that someone had discovered. A chemist and a doctor had collaborated on its analysis and found it to be healthful.



"We still represent the United States," Congressman Burley was saying, "and Colonel Rogers here says that the servicemen are on our side. Also, we can count on the English to be with us, if necessary, and the three Norwegians. I don't think Weston has a chance of making trouble. Now here is a list compiled today showing the number of men—"

CONGRESSMAN Burley stopped talking and followed the gaze of all the others. He saw Henry and Martia standing by the fireside, holding hands and looking very impatient.

"All right!" he said. "You kids will have to clear out. We're having a conference."

"That," said Henry, "is somewhat obvious. But I—"

"Now look here! Don't you get sassy!" Burley glared at Henry impatiently, but Uncle Andy walked over to the boy and put an arm around his shoulders. He placed his other arm around Martia.

"Just a minute!" he interrupted. "I'm afraid you don't know Henry. He would never have intruded if he did not have something important to say."

"Always pampering the kid," commented Dr. Edwards to Captain Merman. "Thinks he's a genius and he's only a pest!"

"Your English allies have gotten themselves lost," said Henry. "Lady Dewitt, Sir Rollins, the Crispin sis-

ters, Langham, Emily Duncan, several other women and three servicemen."

"Please!" Martia cried. "It's always daylight here. Can't a search party be sent right away?"

Some of the men looked at Captain Merman. He was a tall, lean man in his late thirties, still wearing the pants and shirts of his uniform, as well as the cap. His paleness and the redness of his eyelids, thought Henry, were probably due to a hyperthyroid condition.

"My orders," said Merman, "were that no explorations would be conducted without proper authorization. They went on their own, principally because of Lady Dewitt's refusal to use the river water and because our distilled water can't be rationed in her favor. I don't see why—"

"You are engaged here in an emergency conference," said Henry, "to determine what can be done about Tommy Weston's gang. If you're worried, why don't you stall for time by organizing the whole camp into a search party—including Weston's men? The physical action and the adventure of it will be tantamount to a psychological weapon against anarchy."

Martia beamed at Henry in pride and gratitude, but most of the men guffawed.

"Ye gods!" exclaimed one of the other congressmen. "That sounded like it was going to be a filibuster! Talk about lobbying! This kid is Capitol material!"

"But it isn't getting us anywhere," said Burley.

"Just a minute," said a small, dark-complexioned man wearing a black shirt, white slacks and dark glasses. "I've heard, second-handedly, some interesting ideas from this boy." Henry had learned that this was Dr. Jules Bauml, a noted astrophysicist attached to the Mount Palomar Observatory. "He thinks we have been transported through time and that it is futile to try contacting our own civilization unless we avail ourselves of a time machine. Of course that is a pessimistic view, but owing to observations of my own I should like to hear his reasons for arriving at such a conclusion."

"Oh hell!" ejaculated one of the businessmen present. "We're probably down in the Caribbean somewhere!"

"No, by God!" said another one. "That wouldn't explain the permanent daylight and no sun!"

"A freak of Nature," insisted the first one. "You've heard of the Land of the Midnight Sun. What's so different about this?"

"Everything!" said Henry.

They all looked at him, startled, including Uncle Andy.

HENRY addressed Dr. Bauml. "As an astronomer you will understand the nature and importance of the ionosphere," he said, amidst raised eyebrows all around. "It is that layer of the atmosphere which protects us from the dangerous

short radiations from the sun. These quanta, striking atoms of oxygen, create ionized oxygen and ozone, forming the ionosphere. Such atoms are necessarily in such rapid motion that they would be lost in space were it not for the magnitude of Earth's gravitation. That is why Earth bears — or *bore*—a high form of intelligent life whereas Mars must continue to lose its ionized oxygen into space and could therefore not support a high form of life."

"Yes, yes!" exclaimed Bauml, impressed. "But what has that to do with the present?"

"Venus does not have an ionosphere," continued Henry. "Otherwise it would have shown up in spectrographs. Its atmosphere is caused largely by violent volcanic action. Volcanoes, incredibly heated storms and no ionosphere, spells no oxygen and no life. Therefore, conclusion number one: We are still on Earth."

Several congressmen snorted. "Who said we weren't?"

"Go on!" encouraged Bauml, while Dr. Edwards began to listen in some surprise. "I agree so far! This is Earth, but where do we go from here?"

"Let us disregard, for the moment," said Henry, "that there is no night. Just concentrate on the fact that we can't see the sun at *any* time, clouds or no clouds. Ergo, the ionosphere has changed, its composition. It would take millions of

years to do that, just as it took billions of years to build it up in the first place. I submit that the sun has cooled and the ionosphere is much thicker than it was before, thus acquiring different characteristics of refraction which reflect light back to Earth. It is almost like a mirror. Just as it once reflected radio waves back, it now shuts out the shorter wavelengths, including light, itself. I submit further, that if the sun were still bright we should notice a difference in relative brightness between day and night. Inasmuch as there is no difference, I say that the sun is now grown dim and feeble, and that we have traveled perhaps a billion years into the future."

"Hey!" cried out another civilian. "I thought there were only five psychos in camp! One billion years! What the—"

"Yes," put in Dr. Edwards, with an impatient scowl, "this business of extrapolating is next to nothing, as it leads nowhere. By the boy's own argument I could give the rebuttal that if a billion years have passed then Venus may have had time to finally develop an ionosphere and thus be able to support the higher forms of life. Behold! I submit that we are on Venus!" This was followed by sympathetic laughter all around.

"Wait now," insisted Dr. Bauml. "Give the boy a chance! Henry, you *have* let me down into mere hypothesis, but we might as well have all of it. Let me ask you a

question. If the sun has cooled, why are we surrounded by all this evidence of lush, tropical life? We should be freezing!"

Henry replied immediately. "Either the ionosphere has developed a sustained reaction that provides us with heat and the regular, life sustaining quanta, while absorbing the hard radiations, or—" He paused, groping suddenly for words.

"Or what!" demanded Dr. Edwards.

"Or *someone* has set up nuclear heating plants all over the planet, or their equivalents. Wait!" He held up his hand as Dr. Edwards joined half the others in derisive laughter. "Go back to that alien creature who stole the babies. Just before he disappeared, precipitating us into our present environment, he spoke to us in a guttural language that was vaguely familiar. You were present, Doctor Bauml, when he spoke. I understand you recognized that language. What was it?"

DR. Edwards sobered. He and Merman and Burley and the others stared at the diminutive astronomer. The latter looked embarrassed.

"I—am German, as you know," he said. "As such I was naturally familiar with Middle High German, owing to my educational background. That is what this alien spoke. I only caught a few words, which were to the effect that no harm would come to any of us if we did some-

thing or other."

"Why didn't you tell us this before?" queried Merman. "If that freak spoke German—"

"Wait!" interrupted Henry. "Middle High German is a dead language. It came into use in the dark ages before the Renaissance and it died out with Martin Luther in the Sixteenth Century of our own era. The fact that this alien spoke that language indicates that he is a time traveler. He has been in our era before and I'll tell you where, when and why!"

"That is a tall order," put in Dr. Edwards.

Uncle Andy turned to Valerie Roagland and the air hostess. "This is the tallest extrapolating I've ever heard from Henry."

By this time, many other people were gathering around to listen, including servicemen and a number of Tommy Weston's men.

"All right!" said Merman. "Let's have it! Where, when and why?"

"The place?" said Henry. "Westphalia, Germany. The time? Twelve eighty-four A.D. The reason? To kidnap children. Oh, I forgot to mention the town . . ."

"Hamelin!" exclaimed Dr. Bauml, astounded. "You mean—"

"Yes," said Henry. "The Pied Piper of Hamelin—no legend. An actual fact!"

"What is this?" asked one of Weston's construction stiffs. "A booby hatch? Let's get on with the meeting. Weston'll be here any minute!"

"Wait!" said Henry again. "Analyze it for yourselves. What does *pied* mean?"

"Mottled color," someone offered.

"Exactly!" Henry exclaimed.

"But it was no clown suit worn in a fairytale. Our alien's skin was definitely mottled. And he was a piper, too!"

"What do you mean?" asked Dr. Edwards.

"I heard it, Martia heard it, and the two children who were kidnapped heard it. I believe only younger ears can hear it owing to a greater sensitivity of the hair cells in the spiral cochlea. The sound, of course, has nothing to do with flutes. It was a phenomenon produced by his equipment."

"Hold on, screwball!" said another one of Weston's gang. "I know all about that Pied Piper yarn. What about the rats in Hamelin? How did he get rid of those?"

"Legends," said Henry, "are twisted from the truth because people who inherit such stories must always reduce the Unknown to the level of their own understanding, just as the people of our own time insisted that the flying saucers were everything from beer bottle tops to weather balloons. People in following generations could not accept the original story, so it degenerated gradually into a nice little bedtime story. But the fact remains, this Pied Piper is a time traveler who needs children for some purpose of his own. He represents a very ad-

vanced science. It is possible that he is here, somewhere, and *if* he is, we might have a chance of getting him to send us all back to where we came from!"

Suddenly, the Indian Prince broke into their midst. His turban was slightly awry, his eyes were large with anxiety, and he was sweating. "Please!" he exclaimed, in a thick accent, wringing his fat hands in supplication before Henry. "You are an older soul! You have a vision beyond us all! I believe only you can save us! If you can bring me back to my own world I will pay you anything! I am rich! My fortune is yours if you will do it!"

This led to general confusion, but it also led to something else. One of Weston's men separated himself from the crowd and went to find his leader. Weston and Sceranka were back in camp, eating supper and licking their wounds. But they were gratified by one salient fact. Scarface was conspicuous by his absence. There would be no interference from him tonight . . .

**W**HEN the meeting took place, Weston and Sceranka came to it alone. The rest of the gang, numbering about thirteen, were nowhere in sight. Merman and Burley told him about the missing people and suggested a postponement.

"To hell with that!" he told them. His mouth, though bruised by Scarface's fists, grinned at them in a way that was not at all reassuring, and his tawny eyes met theirs with

a new confidence born of secret knowledge. "We can send a search party later. Right now we're concerned with—"

"In other words," Burley broke in, unsmilingly, "you insist on having the meeting?" About fifteen officers and servicemen silently closed in around the periphery of the group, but this did not appear to bother Weston, although Sceranka kept looking at them nervously.

"Yes," Weston answered. "Let's have the meeting!"

"Then you are out of order!" snapped Burley. "We will follow those rules of order which are befitting to a deliberative assembly. Captain Merman is our Chairman. We have an agenda for discussion, which will be introduced in proper sequence. Anyone wishing to speak will first recognize the Chair."

"Oh can it!" fumed Weston. "That's why I'm here—to tell you we're going to cut all the red tape and get down to facts—"

At a sign from Merman, two M. P.s stepped forward and tapped Weston on the shoulder. Each carried a club. They smiled through their teeth.

"We are the Sergeants at Arms," said the largest of the two, who was at least within twenty pounds of Weston's brawny mass. "Do you want to be nice or be made to stand in a corner?"

Weston appeared to swell like a toad. When his eyes met Scer-

anka's, over the M. P.'s shoulder, he nodded almost imperceptibly. Whereupon Sceranka threw his hat into the air.

Within three seconds, six G.I.s on the outside of the circle yelled in pain and fell to the ground. Protruding from their backs were crude but sturdy arrows. Standing on the beach sand just outside the jungle were twelve bowmen, all from Weston's gang. Two were Spaniards. One was a Filipino law student who had flunked out of Oxford. One was a pale, continental type, a non-descript foreigner traveling on a French passport whom Merman had suspected of being a Communist spy. The rest were American construction stiffs—not the ordinary kind who signed up on a year's contract to save up and come home again, but the camp drifters who had roamed the world since adolescence, men actually without a country, uneducated, but capable of running heavy equipment for American tax dollars. It was strictly a "cost-plus" crew, thought Burley.

Women screamed. Men cursed. And there were cries of "Murderers!" "Assassins!"

Weston and Sceranka ran to a position in front of their men, who handed them the only two axes in camp.

"All right!" Weston shouted. "I thought this party would turn out this way. From now on, I'll run this show! You're going to shut your traps and listen to *me*!"

THE remaining officers and servicemen, plus many of the older male civilian members of the camp, were gathering swiftly into a sullen crowd, facing Weston's bowmen.

"When we charge 'em," whispered one officer, "throw sand in their eyes and let 'em have it!"

"Just a minute," said Uncle Andy to all the members of his own group. "All this happened because we failed to recognize the man's ignorance. Let him talk! Talk is cheaper than human lives. Let's hear what he has to say!"

"Well, Dearden," shouted Weston, "You're getting smart!—even if you are insulting. But I'll take care of you later!"

"All right!" agreed Burley. "Let him jabber!"

"Spill it, Weston!" shouted Merman. "We've got plenty of time around here. All our lives!"

"No we ain't!" Weston answered. "We ain't got no time at all. We think there's a way of gettin' back to where we came from! Hey, Mohammed!" he yelled at the Indian Prince. "You willing to come on my side and pay off like you said if I get you back home?"

The Indian Prince, though frightened, separated himself from the crowd. He stood there, hesitantly, looking first at Weston, then back at Henry. "I will go with anyone," he said, "even assassins, if they lead me home! And I will pay! But young Henry here—he's the one who—"

"Sure!" grinned Weston. "Henry's the boy with the answers! You didn't think we were going to leave *him* out, did you? He's going to help us find that big, bad bogeyman who stole the babies. And then when we find him we're going to sort of talk him into sending us back—that is, those who are on my side!"

"What's the matter with you, Weston!" shouted Burley. "We all have the same goal. If you had taken time to listen—"

"Pipe down! We been listening to you government guys all our lives and never got nowhere. We don't want this party to turn into another Korean truce talk. We want action!"

IN THAT moment, Weston saw action, but of a totally unimagined kind.

Very suddenly, the world about them changed. Geologically, it was the same. The same, eternal daylight sky was above them. Before them lay the same, mysterious ocean with its plethora of unknown life forms. The low hills, the jungles, the flowers, the colorful birds—almost all the same.

**B**UT the jungle had been cleared away for several miles, and in its place stood a modern city with tall, well-designed buildings, electric power facilities, and motorized traffic. On the sea lay a fleet of gray battleships and cruisers. In the sky

were at least a hundred jet aircraft, of strangely futuristic design, black and delta-shaped. The latter were attacking the warships with bombs and rocket fire, and their ears were assailed by the staccato reports of guns answering from the ships—and from the land.

The city defenses were aimed also at the strange, black aircraft. Ack-ack was all over the sky. Bombs and planes screamed through the air, and the ground shook with the shock of explosions.

The castaways, including Weston's gang, stood on a great pier before the sprawling city—a pier which lay half demolished around them, smouldering from several recent hits. Nearby, out in the water, lay a commuter vessel, semi-capsized, its crew and uniformed personnel leaping overboard and attempting to swim back to shore.

Armed troops were all around the castaways, rushing to set up new defenses on the pier, to repair loading derricks and put out fires with portable equipment.

"Hey!" shouted one of the castaways. "It's just like back home!"

"Civilization!" shouted another. "That screwy Garden of Eden was all a bad dream! We're back—thank God!"

Henry reasoned it was not the scene of battle they were welcoming. It was rather the transition from an unknown situation to a comprehensible one that they hailed with such relief.

"What is it?" queried Martia, close beside him. "What's happening? Where are we?"

"We're *not* back home," he said. "Still in the future—but an alternate one. Keep your eyes open and we'll know very soon."

This was a pointed remark, inasmuch as an officered detail of troops had turned its amazed attention on the heterogeneous group. Weston's gang, especially, looked like a bunch of anachronisms with their crude bows and arrows and their stupidly gaping mouths.

"Look!" cried Doctor Bauml, pointing over the heads of the approaching soldiers. "On that distant hill!"

When everybody looked, they saw, unmistakably, a towering space ship, its slender nose pointing skyward. Men swarmed over it like ants, removing scaffolding. Some of the attacking planes were concentrating on this point and were being met with the most determined counter-fire observable in any part of the city.

"That rocket ship," said Uncle Andy, "seems to be the main issue of the battle."

"Andy!" exclaimed Valerie Roagland. "Are all of us insane?"

"I say there!" cried the officer in charge of the detail surrounding them. His accent was unmistakably British. "Who are you and whence came you?"

"That would be a better question if *we* asked it," replied Burley.

"What the devil *is* this!" He waved his hand in an all-inclusive gesture.

The officer's eyes narrowed. "Why do you evade the question?" he almost growled. "You are certainly not of New Bretania. Therefore, you are Texanian spies! You are under arrest!"

"Good Lord!" exclaimed Henry, turning pale. "Oh no!"

"What, Henry? What is it?" insisted Martia. Uncle Andy, Valerie, Miss Hollenbeck and Pee Bee crowded close, listening to the two and watching their captors at the same time.

BURLEY drew himself up and addressed the officer. "I am an official representative of the government of the United States of America," he said. "I demand—"

"My dear sir," flamed the officer. "You are not in a position to make demands. You will follow me promptly and obey orders under penalty of death! Can you not understand that we are under martial law here?"

"Git on wi' ye!" said one soldier nearby, prodding Weston and Sceranka with a double-barreled, automatic rifle. "Or ye'll git a puck in the lug!"

"Let's go, everybody," said Colonel Rogers. "Inasmuch as this is a military situation I'll take charge of our group and be the spokesman. When we're presented to the authorities for questioning we'll have time



enough to tell our story."

"And who would believe it?" asked Dr. Edwards, pessimistically.

"Who would believe *this!*" retorted Colonel Rogers.

They all marched along with their captors, including Weston and company, simply because there was no alternative.

In a subterranean staff headquarters somewhere in the center of the city, they faced an impatient Major in the service of Her Majesty, Helena III, Empress of New Bretania.

"What is all this!" he complained, over an unprocessed pile of urgent communiques, even as two visiphones on his desk glowed red call signals simultaneously. "Who are you? I can't be bothered at a time like this—"

"We don't wish to bother you," interrupted Colonel Rogers. He could appreciate the indescribable urgency of war and knew it would be best not to antagonize the officer with too much verbiage. "Our presence here is not of our choosing and it would take too long to explain, although we are perfectly willing to do so at your convenience. Suffice it to say, we are neither New Bretanians nor Texanians. So I suggest you place us in protective custody for the time being, and if you need volunteers for some of the manual work in the city you may call upon us to help."

The Major ignored the visiphones and glared at Colonel Rogers. "I said—who are you?"

"I am Colonel Rogers, attached to the Infantry of the United States Army, and these are—"

"United States!" exclaimed the Major. "That's a myth! What in the devil are you trying to say?"

Henry shook his head sadly, but with a grim expression of conviction on his aquiline face.

Martia's eyes were wide as she drew closer to him. "Henry!" she whispered. "I think I *know!*" Tears came to her eyes, and she said, "Mother! I'll never see her again."

For answer, Henry pressed her hand, wordlessly, and continued looking at the Major.

"Please!" said Dr. Bauml, pressing forward. "What is this battle all about? What is that space ship for?"

THE Major sprang to his feet, motioning to the guard detail that had brought them in. "These strangers are some type of Fifth Column!" he exclaimed. "They are obviously attempting to camouflage their true identities and their purpose under a blanket of innocence! But no one could be *that* innocent of the facts!" He leaned forward, addressing Dr. Bauml. "My dear sir, in case you have been reposing under a rock somewhere, I'll bring you up to date! Earth is dying! The ionosphere is shifting toward critical mass. Our race—the human race—is becoming sterile under the hardening radiations. It is imperative that we transport some of our

kind to another world—Venus, to be specific! Or hadn't you heard that Hardesty and Williams discovered an atmosphere there under the upper dust strata? The Texanians could not build an ark such as ours—so they want it!" His dark eyes blazed angrily. "*You* want it! You are Texanians and you want our ship, but you're not going to get it! Take them away! They are spies!"

"Irons, sir?" asked the officer in charge of the detail.

"Irons be damned! Execute them! This is war!"

They stood in a bleak prison yard, sixty-nine passengers of MATS flight 702, London to New York. But where they were just now did not matter. A ganged battery of machine guns faced them, with one operator seated apathetically at a bank of controls.

"*Ready—!*" cried the officer in charge.

Some of the women screamed, while others prayed. Uncle Andy had an arm around Valerie Roagland, as well as Henry and Martia. Sceranka was swearing in Polish. Pee Bee was hiding behind as many people as he could find, shivering. "*Aim—!*"

Henry thought: This is all impossible! I can't let it happen! But who am I to—

Something began to happen inside his head. It felt like he had had a cold and his ears were clearing up. But it was purely a mental sensation: Suddenly, he saw ev-

erything with a new clarity. And in the same instant he began to utilize that new faculty.

But before the word, "Fire!" could be given, a new change occurred with the abruptness of an explosion . . .

THEY were back again at the old campsite on that timeless shore, with the jungle all around them. The city was gone, as were the warships and the planes and the soldiers—and the space ship. There stood Weston and Sceranka as before, in front of their calloused bowmen.

And Weston was saying, "We want action!"

Both Henry and Martia looked at their companions in growing amazement, *because the others acted exactly as if there had been no interlude whatsoever!* Yet Henry and Martia, when they looked into each other's eyes, knew that *they* remembered!

"Wait!" cried Henry. Everyone looked at him, including Weston and his gang. "Something has happened! Doesn't anybody remember?"

"Remember *what!*" exclaimed Weston, impatiently.

"The city! All those warships and planes!"

They all looked at him, blankly, and he and Martia returned their stares, anxiously.

"The Major who called us Texanian spies! The space ship! The

firing squad—I mean, those machine guns!”

Again, the blank, uncomprehending looks.

“The kid’s cracking up!” said Weston. “Let’s get on with this! Now I’m running things and I’ll tell you what we’re going to do!”

Just then Martia and Henry grasped each other’s hands, their eyes wide with consternation.

“Henry, do you—”

“Yes!” he hissed, cautioning her to silence. “I hear it!”

*The ringing was in their heads.*

“Henry,” said Uncle Andy, “what in the world were you saying about a city?—and about this—er—space ship?”

Henry grasped his uncle’s arm and signalled to Valerie, and Peggy Holtenbeck. “Follow me quickly!” he said.

The two young women looked at Uncle Andy and he studied Henry and Martia gravely. Then he turned to them and nodded. They all followed. Henry and Martia both put their fingers to their lips, admonishing them to silence.

They were about fifty feet away from the group when Weston yelled at them. “Hey! Where you think you’re going?”

Henry grabbed Martia’s arm and told her to scream and flail about, which she did instantly.

“The girl’s out of her head!” answered Uncle Andy, catching on. “Psycho! We’ll be back in a minute!”

“Well—hurry it up!”

When they gained a clump of verdure that cut off their view of the others, Henry motioned them into the woods. They all ran in to hide, only to be overtaken by Pee Bee.

“What done happened to dat girl?” he asked, panting.

“Nothing,” said Henry.

“Then why are we here?” asked Peggy, the air hostess.

Henry looked at them squarely. “It’s that alien,” he said. “He is close by.”

“The alien!” exclaimed Valerie.

“How do you know!”

Pee Bee went bug-eyed again. “You mean dat Missing Link is back? Man, where’s mah feet!”

“Stay here!” said Henry. “I believe he is searching for the main group. We can go back through the jungle and watch from hiding.”

“Oh no!” exclaimed Pee Bee. “Dis am de point of no return! Ah just lost mah reversin’ equipment and can only head straight for the no’th pole!”

But they all went back and looked.

**J**UST as they arrived at their hidden point of observation, a bedlam of sound smote their ears. Screams, yells, swearing—the sound of running feet.

“Wait a minute!” they heard Weston shouting. “Hold on, all of you! I’ll handle this!”

The sound of running stopped.

The bedlam subsided.

They saw Weston making gestures at his bowmen to take up a new position. With tense motions and sober faces, the men obeyed, fixing arrows to their bowstrings while the rest of the camp watched them—and something else that stood just on the edge of the jungle.

There, towering a head above the tallest man, was the alien, staring at all of them with his one, baleful eye. Across his chest, near the breathing orifice in the middle, he wore several patches of something that looked like plasters, or bandages, where Scarface had shot him. He looked weak. His shoulders slumped, and his arms dragged almost to the ground.

"What's the matter, Merman!" yelled Weston.

Merman had been one of the first to run. Now he stood at a considerable distance from the group, looking back.

"You were willing to have a small bunch of guys tackle this freak in the lounge on board the plane," Weston shouted. "But now when you're face to face with him you run! Don't go yellow, Merman! I said I was taking charge, and I *am*!"

Weston looked at the crowd of castaways and grinned, contemptuously. "This was our 'common goal,' wasn't it? Now I've got it my way! If it was up to you guys, you'd all put on your best ties and sit down to have a conference. Not me! I say—*get* him!"

Whereupon, he led his men toward the alien, axe in hand.

"No, wait!" cried Dr. Bauml. "Don't harm him or we'll never know!"

When the alien saw Weston and his gang approach, he did nothing. He only stood there and watched them come. He still wore the same pack of apparatus on his back and the controls at his waist. The tendrils around his double wrists flicked nervously. And many there were who wondered what had become of Scarface—the man with the gun.

Weston stopped in front of the alien, about five feet from him, which was approximately just beyond the other's reach.

"Now talk, damn you!" he said. "You got us into this and you're going to get us out of it!"

But the alien gave no answer. Nor did his single, multi-faceted eye move from its fixed focus upon the man who addressed him. It glared in its concentration, indefinitely.

Weston turned to his men. "He's dead beat," he said. "Those bullet wounds made him weak. We gotta capture him, but don't mess him up too much. We'll just get him down and tie him up. Somebody get some rope!"

Confidently, Weston dropped his axe temporarily and hitched up his trousers. As he did so, his arms and chest bulged and glistened massively in the eternal light of the sky. Sceranka hulked ponderously behind him, his ham-like paws ready for ac-

tion. Five more of Weston's best huskies closed the semi-circle before the alien.

HENRY could feel the pulse in his arteries, and he saw a pink spider making a web in front of him, in the timeless, geometrical design that all such spiders made. Beside him, he could feel Martia's tenseness. Down by the beach, the waves rolled peacefully across the sands, sighing with the eternal voice of the sea. The jungle smelled of damp rot and sickly sweet flowers. And he sweated.

Weston, grinning somewhat tensely now, slowly lifted up his axe again, with the blunt end toward the alien. He took one swift step forward, but that was all. The alien emitted a blood-curdling, monstrous roar and waded into the gang, just as Weston reversed his axe and struck him a blow in the neck. It was an interrupted blow, because the alien's great arms flew up and sent Weston sailing unconscious through the air. He then grabbed Sceranka, oblivious to three arrows in his side and four men climbing onto him, striking, punching and tearing at him. Sceranka's rib case popped audibly as he was instantly crushed and mangled. Then the alien turned and tore one man's arm off and sent another of his attackers flying after Weston, headless. The others turned and ran.

But they did not get far.

He paralyzed them with some in-

visible force controlling it from his waist. Others did not need this treatment, because they had fainted.

Then he released them from the paralysis sufficiently for them to walk, but not to run. He motioned to all of them, making it quite plain that they were his prisoners and were to follow him into the jungle.

Without a murmur, they obeyed like somnambulists. The alien leaned over the ones who had fainted and did something else with the controls at his waist. These also revived, in a state of trance, and obeyed his silent commands. In single file they went—Merman, Nelson, the navigator, the commissary steward, Congressman Burley, Dr. Bauml, Dr. Edwards, Dr. Singer, Colonel Rogers, the women, the servicemen—all of them blindly following a trail into the Unknown.

Henry and Martia turned to look at their companions. There were Uncle Andy and Valerie and Peggy. But Pee Bee had gone. His trail of sudden departure was marked cleanly through the otherwise impenetrable underbrush on their right. Sizeable branches looked as though they had been shorn clean.

Silently, these five watched their friends and enemies depart—all of those who had not been killed—and excepting Weston, who seemed also to be dead. He lay face down in the sand, arms pointing toward the jungle, feet awash in the surf. He had been thrown thirty feet.

Henry felt Martia shudder.

IT was decided that to trek aimlessly through the jungle unaware of what they were looking for would be futile. Instead, they chose to follow the well delineated trail of the captives in order to determine where the alien was taking them.

Uncle Andy and Henry provided the two women with bows and arrows which had fallen from the hands of some of the alien's attackers.

"Do you know how to use them?" he asked.

"Yes," said Valerie Roagland, "but I hope it will not be necessary." The arrow heads were tipped with sharpened pieces of aluminum rod taken from the plane. In fact, some of the arrows were made entirely of aluminum rod.

"We don't know what may be in that jungle," said Uncle Andy, picking up Weston's axe for himself. He carefully examined the blade of the axe. There were traces of very dark blood on it. "Our Pied Piper was wounded in the neck by Weston's blow. I wonder if he'll survive. After all, bullet wounds, arrow wounds—and a chomp in the neck with an axe!"

"Good Heavens!" exclaimed Peggy Hollenbeck. "That ought to spell curtains even for Superman!"

"But—" Martia started to express herself, then her eyes widened in alarm as the full implication of her thought struck her. "He is the only one who knows what this is all about!" she exclaimed. "He's

the conductor, the engineer and the crew! He knows how we got here and how to get us back to where we came from—if that is possible. If he dies now—!"

They all looked at each other in shocked silence, except for Henry. He merely experimented with one of the bows.

"She's right," he said. "Whether friend or enemy, we've got to make sure that creature does not die until we learn what we need to know. But I'll tell you one thing that may be encouraging . . ."

Peggy Hollenbeck's chin began to tremble and her eyes misted suddenly. "Henry, if you can say *anything* encouraging about this whole business, for the love of God let's have it before I crack up!" Valerie put her arms around her and the other burst into a fit of crying, which was a delayed reaction from what she had witnessed fifteen minutes before.

Martia might have joined her, but the secret knowledge she shared with Henry helped to sustain her.

"Somewhere in that jungle," said Henry, "is a time machine . . ."

He calculated that the shock of that statement would bring Peggy out of her semi-hysteria, and it did. She looked at him over Valerie's shoulder, her tearful eyes suddenly wide with surprise and wonderment. Valerie and Uncle Andy both turned slowly to stare incredulously at the two adolescents, both of whom

appeared to share the same conviction.

And Uncle Andy thought: *What incredible thing is it these two children share in common?*

But he asked, "What makes you think so?"

IT was then that both Henry and Martia launched themselves into a detailed and vivid account of that strange interlude in time which they, alone, remembered. The other three listened, with both mixed emotions and mixed opinions relative to the youngsters' sanity.

"The reason we're giving you such a wealth of details," Henry concluded, "is because therein lies the proof that there is a time machine in the jungle."

Uncle Andy shook his head, bewildered. "I'm afraid I'm hopelessly lost," he said. "I can't see where it fits in. And if it happened, why wouldn't the rest of us remember it? You say we were there, too."

Henry cast a covert glance at Martia, and only she could understand what that look meant. Impulsively, she grasped his hand and held on to it.

"Let's skip your lack of memory for a minute," Henry answered. "Instead, try to remember the fact that certain people were missing in this camp before the meeting took place."

"That's right!" said Valerie. "The English people—" She looked at

Martia. "Your mother, Lady Dewitt! She went away and got lost!"

"And Sir Rollins!" put in Peggy.

"Now it comes back," said Uncle Andy. "They had gone out to look for springwater and had not returned."

"To make a long story short," said Henry, "there were two separate groups. First, the English group, consisting of Lady Dewitt, Cyril Rollins, the Crispin sisters, the two mothers who lost their babies, and Mr. Langham. The second group consisted of Martia's governess, Emily, three WAACs, and the three Texas GIs.

"Now as I see it, here's what happened. The first group found the time machine and entered it, possibly without knowing what they were doing. They were transported back in time perhaps several thousands of years. Stranded there and with no other recourse but to survive, they set up their own type of colony, and their descendants established the Empire of New Bretania."

Peggy looked at Valerie, and both found a common conviction in their eyes. They were sadly understanding and patient as they looked back at Henry and Martia. Uncle Andy only refilled his pipe with the last of his tobacco and watched Henry intently.

"Now wait a minute!" put in Martia. "Henry's not as crazy as you think! Let him continue!"

"We're listening," replied Uncle Andy.

"Having benefitted by some knowledge of modern technology on the part of their original ancestors, this race soon attained a degree of civilization equivalent to our own, though with fewer numbers. Their science enabled them to detect the unbalanced nature of the ionosphere, so they knew they had to get off the planet in order to survive. By some means unknown to us, they were able to make observations through the ionosphere and detect livable conditions on Venus, after all. In other words, after a billion years beyond our time, Venus must have had sufficient time to build up an atmosphere containing a life-sustaining percentage of oxygen. This discovery spurred the building of their space ark, which was to take a representative number of their kind to the new world.

"Now in the meantime let's go back to the second group that was lost—Emily, the WAACs and the Texans. They, too, went through the time machine and built up a civilization contemporaneous with that of New Bretania. Hence the origin of the country, Texania. These latter people were trying to get the ark of space from the New Bretanians.

"Don't you see how it all fits in? When those two groups went through the time machine, we found ourselves in an alternate time, a world changed by their effects on two or three thousand years of the immedi-

ate past."

"Then how did everything get back to where it was originally?" asked Uncle Andy. "What got rid of that alternate time so abruptly?"

"The alien," Henry replied. "I think we arrived here, in the first place, by accident and without his knowledge. As a time-traveler, he was no doubt gone from this world for long stretches of time. Perhaps a gap of several thousands of years means nothing to him. But somewhere along that alternate time he returned. He probably proceeded at once to trace down the sources of New Bretania and Texania. This could have led him not only back to Lady Dewitt and the Texans but forward, again, to this present time, to the moment when they were about to go into the time machine in the first place. Taking them prisoner thus prevented that alternate time from occurring. So it was all a lost interlude and Weston went right on talking at the meeting as though nothing had happened. Yet all the while the alien was now aware of our presence, and so he came to take us into custody."

"That is the most astounding tale I have ever listened to," said Uncle Andy. "Now tell me, Henry, why is it that only you and Martia remember that alternate time experience and we do not?"

Again—that strange, knowing look between Henry and Martia.

"Look!" cried Peggy, pointing toward the beach.



When they all turned and looked they saw the same, eternal sea as before, its lazy surf glistening in the forever light of the sky. But there was one, subtle difference. Weston lay there no longer. The whole beach was a scene of desolation—deceptively peaceful, ominously deserted.

"Cone on!" said Uncle Andy, with sudden sternness. "We can talk about all this later. Just now we'd better try to keep one step ahead of Weston."

They took *all* of the available weapons with them . . .

THE trail of the captives led them gradually upward toward the summit of the low range of hills. They soon discovered that the nature of the jungle near the seashore was much less spectacular than the aspect of it inland. It began to appear as though Nature had dumped all her experiments into one bottle and mixed them together.

They passed through "groves" of trees that were mostly roots, all intertwined like some giant vine. Their bark was like shaggy hair and their fine, web-like branches sprouted foliage that looked like feathers. Among these feathered branches crawled brilliant orange and red land crabs, some of them as much as two feet in diameter.

In a swamplier region just at the base of the hills they observed flat, leathery looking discs oozing along over the swamp mud, some of them

reaching three feet in diameter. They could not imagine what they were until they saw one of them uncover a six foot, scaly worm. The latter fought ferociously, but the leathery disc wrapped itself around its body and the worm's mouth very much like that of a snapping turtle, was incapable of penetrating that leathery hide.

"Those are gigantic leeches," observed Uncle Andy.

And so they went on, following the trail upward, beyond the swamp. They discovered carnivorous plants, huge insects, gigantic birds, but always any mammalian species they saw was small and in the minority.

Finally, they came to an abrupt halt, because the trail ended. There were no more footprints, no more tell-tale marks such as trampled weeds and underbrush or broken branches. No matter where they searched, they could not find a further continuation of the trail. It ended in the center of a meadow, half way up in the jungle clad hills.

"You don't suppose they could have been taken away in some kind of an airship, do you?" asked Uncle Andy.

"No," said Henry. "There are no marks here showing that any such vessel has been sitting here. Moreover, if the alien had come in an aircraft, why would he land it here and walk so far?"

"Hey! Get yo'selves off'n dat place!"

When they all looked, startled,

behind them, they saw Pee Bee standing on the edge of the meadow.

"Pee Bee!" exclaimed Valerie, relieved to see something that was both familiar and harmless in this place. "How did you get here?"

"Get off'n dat place you're standin' on!" shouted Pee Bee. "It goes down into de ground where all dose other folks's went!" His eyes were wide with superstitious terror. "Man, ah had mah suspicions dat Missin' Link was de debbil, an' ah don't need no further convincin'! He's *it*! He done took dem folks t'*his* place! Dat's where dey are!" he yelled, hysterically. "Dey's done gone to de hot place! Get off'n dat ground!"

"Poor Pee Bee!" said Peggy. "Now he's going crazy on us!"

PEE Bee ran back and forth at one-edge of the meadow, helplessly wringing his hands but not daring to approach his friends.

"Look at this," said Martia. "It's a cairn!"

They had not noticed it before, because it was small and half concealed by weeds.

"Who could have put that there?" asked Peggy.

"Perhaps one of our captured friends," said Uncle Andy, squatting down to examine it.

"Get off'n dat ground!" shouted Pee Bee, at the top of his voice.

Uncle Andy removed the top rock from the cairn and uncovered a metal pipe with a screw cap on it. "Oh,

oh!" he said. "Booby trap!"

"Unscrew it!" Henry urged him.

"Do you think you'd better?" asked Valerie.

"What else can we do?" put in Martia. "We can't just sit down here and form a colony of our own!"

Uncle Andy looked at the two women and their faces colored. "You asked for it!" he said, abruptly, and unscrewed the cap.

Beneath the cap were two tiny light bulbs embedded in a small panel, in addition to a red button. One of the lights glowed red.

"Well! Civilization at last! Shall I press the button?"

"I think Pee Bee may be right," said Henry. "They probably all went down under the ground and this is the control operating the hidden opening."

Uncle Andy looked up at him. "But if we go rushing in we're liable to end up captives too . . ."

In that moment, however, the decision was made for them. They discovered that the cairn marked the exact center of an area that was about fifty feet in diameter. This area suddenly sank downward.

"Run!" shouted Uncle Andy, springing to his feet.

But it was too late.

THE walls of the pit into which they descended were twenty feet high before they could reach the edge of the circular area. As they continued their descent, the walls grew higher—fifty feet, seven-

ty-five, a hundred . . .

PEE BEE threw himself on the trampled jungle grass and beat at his head in blind frustration.

"Ah told 'em!" he cried out. "Ah done told 'em t'stay off'n dat debbil ground! Now dey done gone 'n left me all alone—'n where am I?"

He sat up, abruptly, more bug-eyed than ever before. He listened.

The still, hot air brought him only the sound—and the smell—of the pristine jungle surrounding him. A giant bird with a black back and brilliant yellow belly soared overhead and squawked at him hostilely. Somewhere down the hill something small and warm-blooded squealed in terror. He heard a tremendous threshing about in the underbrush and remembered the vines that made a net for their prey—then clutched it inescapably and mashed it into pulp before devouring it. The eternal sky that never turned dark and cool, that sky up there that beat its itchy heat down on him and was making a rash creep up on his skin—it wasn't God's blue sky.

But it was *his* sky—Pee Bee's! All Pee Bee's world now.

He sprang to his feet and screamed, "Dey can't leave me alone in dis place!"

But when he looked at the big, round, gaping hole in the center of the meadow he had to admit the reality of the situation. He *was* alone!

So he threw himself down on the musty smelling grass again and sobbed uncontrollably. How had he gotten himself into this? By being in the Army in the first place. He didn't make the wars and all the trouble in the world, but they dragged him off to Europe to hold a bayonet in the people's faces—at a boundary line. He didn't make those boundaries! God made the world, but he didn't make no boundary lines. Man made the boundaries. Man made shoes for me to shine.

Shine, *shine?*

*All God's chillun got shoes . . .*

"Pee Bee!"

Was that somebody calling him? Sure! Hank Thomas, standing there by his newspaper stand at 12th and Central. The traffic light was red. *Was* red. *Was* red.

When? A *billion* years ago! That's what Henry said.

"Pee Bee!"

That was *Henry* calling!

Pee Bee sat up again and looked out onto the meadow. The hole was gone, all filled in. In the middle of it stood Henry, alone, beckoning to him.

"Come on, Pee Bee! It's all right!"

Pee Bee jumped to his feet and started to run. Then he stopped, abruptly.

"Oh no!" he said. "Ah done heard about *my*-rages before! Sometimes it's a lake in de middle of de desert or one of dem oh-wayseses,

but you ain't gonna fool Pee Bee! Ah's stayin' right here an' if Gabriel's still got wind left after all dis time t'blow dat beat-up ol' horn o' his he's gonna have t'play a solo fo' jist little ol' me—'cause I ain't leavin' dis spot! No debbil's gonna git me. No animulated bush is gonna git me! An' no *my*-rage is gonna git me! Ah's jist gonna sit here an' wait fo' me, only kind of pick-up dat pays off—when Gabriel blows dat horn!"

Henry approached him and took him by the arm. "It's all right, Pee Bee. It's me in the flesh. Now come on! There's no time to lose."

As the circular slab of meadowland lowered itself once more into the ground, Pee Bee remained on his knees, clutching Henry to him for dear life. At the bottom of the pit he fell into Uncle Andy's and Valerie's arms, sobbing. They patted him and consumed several minutes in reassuring him.

All the while, the others shared one thought in common that they felt it would be inopportune to express to Pee Bee. The place they had reached appeared to be empty. Yet someone had operated controls to let them in—those button controls right there in the passageway.

The question was: *Who?*

THEY were in a subterranean city, or palace, or laboratory. It was difficult to determine the purpose of everything they saw. Light apparently without a source follow-

ed them automatically wherever they went. The walls, ceiling and floor seemed to be made of a translucent substance that was as soft as rubber yet tougher than steel. Now Henry's billion year theory made more sense to the others. In all that time some high form of civilization had to evolve. And this was indisputable evidence that it had.

But why was it hidden so cleverly under the ground? This fact allowed them to presuppose the existence of an enemy. What, in the outer world, could oppose the race that had built this?

Or more logical still—what, in outer space?

"Perhaps," said Uncle Andy, "it's the ionosphere. This is another answer to the danger of hard radiations."

"But not for long," said Henry. "When the critical moment comes there'll be no more atmosphere. What will they do without air?"

"The place is empty," observed Peggy. "Where did the others go?"

That was the principal question.

Twenty minutes later, they stood in a circular room which was roughly forty feet in diameter. In one wall was a mirror, ten feet high. It shimmered like molten silver. They had been in the room twice already.

"What do we do now?" asked Valerie. "Go back to some of those control rooms and start pulling levers?"

"Wait!" exclaimed Martia. "Listen!"

In another moment they could hear the sound of their own breathing. Then—unmistakably — they heard slow, hesitant footsteps.

Valerie and Peggy paled, remembering only too vividly the one-eyed towering creature that had thrown Weston thirty feet through the air. Henry appropriated Valerie's bow and arrow. Uncle Andy, his jaws clamped on a pipe that had long since burned out, took a firm grip on his axe. Pee Bee stood rooted to the floor, unable to do anything but stare in the direction of the curving passageway from which the sounds of the footsteps emanated.

"Weston tried violence against him," whispered Martia to Henry. "Maybe if we—"

"Shh!" From Uncle Andy. He raised his axe and braced himself.

The automatic, progressive light of this place advanced into view and blended with their own light aura as the owner of the footsteps approached.

Once more, Henry's mind began to awaken into that strange condition of ultimate clarity, as it had in alternate time, in New Bretania, before the machine guns.

"Hold up!" he said, lowering his bow.

"Yes!" exclaimed Martia. "It's a friend!"

At that moment, Scarface stepped into view, gun in hand. And Peggy almost swooned with relief.

Pee Bee wiped his forearm across

his moist brow and said, "Man! Dat's de finest lookin' *my-rage* ah seen today!"

Uncle Andy could not refrain from studying the two adolescents again in amazement. They had definitely known beforehand that Scarface would appear instead of the alien.

"I've been doing some checking," said Scarface, without smiling, and without preamble. "There's only one place they could have gone."

"Did you let us in here?" asked Uncle Andy, irrelevantly.

"Yes. There's some kind of viewer that shows who's upstairs. When I saw you out there I pressed the entrance button. But I've been busy since. I think I know the next step."

"Where have you been all this time?" asked Henry.

Scarface glanced at Martia, then at the shimmering mirror behind her. "Trying to trace down missing persons," he answered. "I was topside in the jungle when One Eye brought in his prisoners. So I came down here to pick up the trail, and it ends in front of that mirror."

AS all of them turned to look at the shimmering mirror, Scarface advanced toward it to show them something that had, until now, escaped their notice. He mounted two steps of a raised dais on which the mirror stood. Then he halted before it and pointed at its base.

"Look at that!" he said.

Protruding from the strange substance of the mirror was a small branch. He kicked it outward with his foot, and more of the branch emerged into view.

"One of the bunch that was captured dropped that as he went through. Look!" He shoved his hand into the mirror up to his elbow, then pulled it out again. "No pain at all," he said.

"A teletransporter!" exclaimed Henry.

Scarface looked at him quizzically. "I knew *you'd* have a name for it," he said. "But come again?"

"A teletransporter. I get more of the picture now," said Henry. "Underground stations like this may be scattered all over the planet. Transportation between them is accomplished instantaneously by this means. Perhaps, with the proper setting of controls, one could walk around the world, through various stations, in a few minutes!"

"Whoa!" said Uncle Andy. "When did you ever see a teletransporter?"

"I didn't, but their possibility may be extrapolated from a set of known facts in our own era of time. One premise is that energy may be propagated at the speed of light through the ether, in various pulsation patterns that can be used for the reintegration of sound or light in receivers. Another premise is that matter is energy. Therefore, it lies within the realm of possibility

to reduce matter to its basic energy components, broadcast the energy in a representative pattern sequence—perhaps on multiple wavebands—and reintegrate the same form of matter at the other end. On the other hand, new principles may have been discovered after our own time, such as the manipulation or use of hyper-space or ether warp of some kind. But I'm sure this is a bonafide teletransporter. We have only to step through it, the way it is adjusted now, and be where our friends are. Since Scarface is armed, I think we need not fear being surprised by the alien."

Scarface raised his brows and looked at the others. "It's simple when you know how," he said, wryly. "But there's an easier way of analyzing this contraption. I'll walk through it. If I don't come back, you can decide for yourselves if you want to follow or take up camping in that jungle outside for the rest of your lives. Here goes!"

"Wait!" cried Uncle Andy.

But Scarface walked into the mirror and disappeared.

They waited. Five minutes. Ten minutes. And Scarface did not return. Finally, Pee Bee offered a solution.

"Ah sees it like this," he said, breaking an oppressive silence. "Ah feels safe when ah's on de right side of dat gun. Now if we goes through dat mirror an' finds Scabface, we's better off than we is here. If we goes into dat mirror an' gets snuffed

into nothin'—then dat means Scah-face an' all de rest is probably big, flattened out blobs of nothin', too. So we might as well join 'em instead of hangin' around here. Ah's sick of it, an' ah's ready!" Before they could stop him, he hurled himself into the mirror and disappeared.

The remaining castaways looked at each other in silence for almost thirty seconds.

Then Uncle Andy said, "I think we'd better try it."

Valerie grasped his hand and Martia's. "Let's all go through together," she suggested, quietly.

They drew close to each other, held hands, and formed a straight line of five as they walked through the mirror together—just as the corridor behind them filled with light again and a pair of bloodshot eyes noted their departure . . .

THIS was definitely a tremendous, subterranean city, or the beginning of one. But its only inhabitants, other than the alien, seemed to be the survivors of MATS flight 702. They were still in a state of hypnosis, standing there on the pillared mezzanine that overlooked the vast room below and beyond them. Other mezzanines were visible on the far side of that tremendous chamber, and beneath them a dozen or so tunnel entrances indicated that there was much to be seen further on.

Among the people who stood out there on the mezzanine were Pee

Bee and Scarface, also in a trance, as well as the Texas GIs, the missing WAACS, Martia's governess, Emily, the two mothers, Mr. Langham, Sir Rollins—and Lady Dewitt.

Martia might have cried out and run to her mother were it not for the fact that the alien, himself, confronted them.

They stood in an alcove that was half filled with banks of controls and instruments. The alien stood before these controls and glared at them purposefully as they came through the teletransmitter. His neck was dark with dried blood, and the three arrows still protruded from his side. His stooping posture gave more evidence than before that he was growing weaker.

As they came through and caught sight of him and the others, one of his hands moved on the control panel, then paused.

*Don't do that!*—came a sharp command into his mind.

He straightened up suddenly, his single eye brightening in shocked surprise as he looked first at Henry, then at Martia.

Valerie, Peggy and Uncle Andy watched the alien, white-faced, uncomprehendingly, as he slowly turned to face them squarely, his eye fairly glittering with inner lights of its own. Then—without warning—he uttered a few unintelligible words, groaned, and fell on his face.

"Quick!" said Uncle Andy. "The gun!" He ran, himself, to pluck it out of Scarface's nerveless fingers.

"But what happened!" exclaimed Valerie. "Is he dead?" She and Peggy did not follow Henry and Martia as they went over to look at the alien.

"Henry," whispered Martia. "What *are* we? I know what you did!"

Henry paused to look at her. "Martia, Lady Dewitt is not really your mother—*is* she?"

Martia colored.

"You know there are no secrets between us," he insisted.

"No," she answered. "I am an orphan, like you."

"An orphan equipped with photographic memory and extra-sensory perception," he said, rapidly. "Also, other things, like extended perception in time. You have lately come to sense that your mind was 'fixed,' long ago, to keep you from using your full powers and to prevent you from knowing who or *what* you were, but these recent experiences have started an awakening process—"

"Yes!" she agreed. "Henry, what—"

His eyes bored into hers, his nostrils flaring in his tense excitement. "Shall I tell you where you were really born?" He turned his head and looked down. "Wait! He's beginning to stir! *He* can give us the final answer!"

As the alien stirred, one of the tendrils on his wrist twirled a control on the panel at his waist. Martia swayed, but Henry stood his

ground, blocking that telepathic signal and showing Martia how to do it at the same time. But Valerie and Peggy and Uncle Andy dropped to the floor, unconscious.

The alien rose slowly to his feet, and Henry turned, instinctively, to get the gun that Uncle Andy had dropped. Then he and Martia, as well as the alien, stiffened in surprise as Scarface smilingly picked up the gun and leveled it.

"Everything is going to be all right," he said, confidently. "I think I have all the answers now. It was not the impossible coincidence I imagined it to be, his coming upon all three of us on board that plane. I think that he—"

"Look out!" screamed Martia.

Out of the mirror had come an unexpected figure, hurling itself upon Scarface's back. Scarface went down and the gun was torn from his fingers, even as the alien reached for his controls on the instrument panel behind him.

"No you don't!" yelled Tommy Weston.

He stood there, his clothes half torn off, supporting himself on one good leg and painfully trying not to bring pressure to bear on the other, which appeared to be sprained.

"I'm *still* running the show!" he yelled, hysterically.

*Quick!*—came a thought from Scarface to the two adolescents. *Through the teleporter!*

As they literally threw themselves into the silvery mirror in back of



them, they heard Weston firing shot after shot into the alien . . .

**B**ACK in the subterranean chamber where they had come upon their first teleporter, Scarface reached behind the mirror and adjusted something, whereupon the sheet of silvery substance took on a bluish sheen.

"You see, I knew all along what this was," he said. "But if I had told you that it would probably lead you right into Mlarn's hands you would not have dared follow. You needed one more shock to bring you out, and I waited there for you, waiting for my final proof." He smiled. "In his weakened condition, it was too *much* of a shock to Mlarn. I didn't quite expect him to pass out like that—the poor beast! Well, anyway, Weston has taken care of him, and this adjustment will keep him from following us."

"Wait, please!" interrupted Henry. "You're assuming too much knowledge on our part. We—"

"Just one more detail," said Scarface, as he made a last adjustment behind the mirror. By now it ~~was~~ a shimmering pink. "Follow me," he directed. And without further explanation he stepped *back* through the teleporter.

Under ordinary circumstances, Henry and Martia would have reacted emotionally to this new development, and fear would have restrained them. But this was a very special circumstance because they

had had an awakening. A calm logic told them that Scarface would not have directed them to follow him if it would do them any harm. One of the premises of that logic was that they had "read" at least his attitude. He was definitely an ally—and the ultimate answer to their mutual enigma.

So they followed him.

They found themselves in a great, domed citadel which covered the entire top of a small island. Some miles away was a long stretch of jungle-covered land and low hills easily recognizable as the country where they had first camped. They could even make out the silvery glitter of the wrecked plane.

They remembered having seen this island from the shore, but it had looked like a flat-topped, barren rock protruding from the sea. Then it came to them that the citadel on top was invisible from the land.

Scarface sat at the console of a tremendous instrument panel. On his head was an elaborate headpiece equipped with silvery anodes that clamped against his skull. His eyes were closed. His fingers made delicate adjustments on the console while strange, almost ultra-sonic tones emanated from a battery of glowing tubes on the wall.

Martia and Henry sensed that they were not to disturb him. So they walked around inside the dome and looked at the sea, and the old, old land. Their minds were awak-

ening to new perspectives and powers, and slowly they caught glimpses of a billion year pattern of destiny that dazzled their thoughts. So they barred these perspectives, holding them breathlessly at the threshold of soaring consciousness—waiting for experienced guidance.

At length, Scarface finished his task and came over to them. "While I am waiting for results," he said, "I will tell you what you want to know . . ."

**H**E told them that somewhere in the era of time in which they had been raised, a cataclysm had occurred which had destroyed all life on Earth. Oceans had come over the land and the whole, slow, geo-biological process of regeneration had begun once more. Evolution through hundreds of millions of years had at last arrived at a dominant, intelligent species of which Mlarn, the "alien," was the last survivor.

He told them the story of Xlarn, of the cooling of the sun, of the reaction sphere, and of the Chronotron. And he described the developments which finally led to Mlarn's time journey in search of life before the Beginning.

"Actually, Mlarn made two trips into Earth time. On his first trip he must have arrived somewhere in an earlier century than the one you knew—"

"The thirteenth century," interrupted Henry.

Scarface looked at him in wonderment. So both Henry and Martia told him the legend of the Pied Piper of Hamelin.

For almost a minute, the other was silent. Then he said, "So that's where the ancestors of Galactic Civilization came from . . ."

"Galactic Civilization!" Martia exclaimed.

Scarface grinned at them. "Yes," he said. "We call it that, because we have inhabited at least a dozen solar systems and are still growing. Let me continue the story . . ."

Mlarn had chosen a group of children because he knew they could be trained and conditioned easier. When he returned through the Chronotron to his own time, the Xlarnan immortals considered the human captives to be unimaginable, short-lived, soft-skinned bipeds, but amazingly advanced mammalia from the evolutionary viewpoint. And they could think, in a primitive fashion. Moreover, they proved to be incredibly fertile.

Only slightly encouraged, the Xlarnans threw them into a Chronotron cycle of five hundred thousand years. The resultant race and alternate time proved to be something for which they were totally unprepared. Since the continuum between Cause and Effect was a simultaneous structure in time, there it was, complete from beginning to end—a superman civilization that encompassed great stretches of the

galaxy. An alien brand of intelligence. Verile resourcefulness and aggressiveness, far outstripping the sterile civilization of Xlarn.

Astounded and frightened, the Xlarnans sought to trace the beginnings of this alternate time, through the Chronotron, and throttle the totally unexpected development at its source. However, this was foreseen by the civilization which had sprung from the Chronotron—and there was war. The Xlarnans were eliminated, except for one, who swore vengeance.

This unsuspected immortal was he who had brought back the ancestors of the star men from beyond Beginning, from the world where the moon was young. This was Mlarn, himself.

**A**LTHOUGH the star men had abandoned the dying solar system of their origin, it was inevitable that a few of their number should be left behind—castaways who finally organized themselves, built a citadel of their own, and sought to build a small star ship in which to escape the threat of the reaction sphere. But the specialized science that had developed the hyper-space drive eluded them and they struggled in vain, while Mlarn besieged them, jealously endeavoring to discover what they were accomplishing. He applied his warfare so vigorously that one day only Kimnar was left, with two youngsters. In fact, they were babes.

In desperation, Kimnar gained access to the Chronotron. Hoping to create another alternate time, he hurled himself and the two children into further depths of time than he intended.

And Mlarn followed him. Aware of his own immortality and equipped with controls that could reverse his course in time because they were interlocked with the Chronotron, he was determined to spend centuries, if necessary, to find those two advanced children and use them to his own advantage . . .

**H**ENRY shook his head to clear it. "Just a moment," he said. "I might extrapolate from all this that you are Kimnar."

"I am," smiled Scarface. "I arrived with you two in the human era, in Earth's calendar year nineteen hundred forty-four A. D., on June 6th, to be exact. The country was France. The place—Caen . . ."

There was a stunned moment of silence. Then Martia's eyes widened. "But that was—!"

"Yes," said Kimnar, smiling grimly. "The Allied invasion of Normandie. I landed right in the middle of D-Day."

"What happened?" asked Henry. "I mean—to you?"

"I was injured by shrapnel. That's how I acquired the scar on my face. I woke up later in a hospital and have been looking for you two ever since."

"Kimnar," said Henry, "are Mar-

tia and I sister and brother?"

Martia's mind leaped out to find the answer in Kimnar's thoughts before he could speak. "No!" she cried, happily. "We're not!" Henry suddenly found her in his arms.

"She's right," Kimnar confirmed.

"You two were survivors of Mlargn's attack in those days when Jirahn was alive—but you were not of the same family."

"Who was Jirahn?"

Kimnar waved a hand toward the great instrument panel. "It was he who invented that hyper-space transceiver. Or rather, he re-invented it, remembering much of the science of our kin, the star men. Just before Mlargn's powerful attack, in which he utilized a deadly radiation that killed everybody in the citadel, I believe Jirahn succeeded in contacting the star men. But I could not be certain, as I had been away from the citadel when the attack came. Upon my return, I found my friends dead, and Jirahn sat slumped over those controls with the head gear attached to him. Certain lights were signalling to me from the board, but I could not decipher them. Moreover, I feared that Mlargn would find the right teleporter frequency to tie his system in with ours, and that he might surprise me at any time. So I removed the bodies, dumping them into the sea, and prepared, generally, to 'abandon ship.' Just as I was about to leave, I found you two halfway down the cliffs on a covered terrace

that your parents had been in the habit of using. They had left you there for your naps. It was then that I conceived the idea of finding the Chronotron and trying to create a new alternate time based on your descendants."

"But Kimnar," persisted Henry. "What about that transceiver? You worked it when we first arrived here, and I remember you mentioned something about 'waiting for results.'"

Kimnar shrugged. "I tried the thing, and to the best of my knowledge I was transmitting through hyper-space at full power. So far, there has been no response. I have the receiver wide open."

"Do you mean—it is conceivable that some of the star people might return for us?"

Kimnar smiled in a puzzling sort of way. "I tossed them the bait," he said. "I think they'll consider the risk worth while—if they received my message."

"What risk is there now? I'm quite sure Weston finished Mlargn off."

KIMNAR raised his eyes heavenward. "Remember? The reaction sphere could go any time. Fortunately, most of the harder radiations are expending themselves convexly, into outer space, and what is shooting towards us still has many miles to travel. But it's getting very unhealthy around here. When the sphere blows, it will take

the Great Ring with it—the ring that used to be the moon.”

Simultaneously, Henry and Martia thought of something else. The other passengers, their original companions. What of them—and Weston, with his gun?

“We can’t leave them here to die,” said Henry. “What about the Chronotron? Can’t we send them all back?”

Kimnar shook his head. “The Chronotron is not that accurate at such long range. Only a few people at a time can go through, and they might land anywhere, from Earth’s prehistoric ages to Xlarn’s eras of development ante-dating the generation of an oxygen content atmosphere. Moreover, Mlarn changed the location of the Chronotron. I have not been able to find it. That was what I originally went back to look for when I left you on the beach after that fight with Weston.”

“Wait a minute!” cried Martia. “But my moth—I mean, Lady Dewitt and those others found it!”

Kimnar looked at both of them wonderingly. Briefly, they told him about the alternate time episode involving New Bretania and Texania, which Mlarn successfully nipped in the bud.

“I must have been underground somewhere at the time,” said Kimnar, “traveling through various teleports. Otherwise, had I been on the surface, I have enough temporal perspective, myself, to have been able to remember that alter-

nate time experience.” He frowned. “If Weston ever finds the Chronotron—”

“Well, why not?” asked Martia. “You couldn’t blame them for going back—or trying to!”

“I see what he means,” said Henry. “If any of them should go back to the approximate time from which we started and do anything to circumvent that moon experiment—”

“*What* moon experiment?” asked Martia.

“I forgot to tell you, I guess. Kimnar knew because he read it in Uncle Andy’s mind. Uncle Andy as Andrew Dearden, is one of the world’s greatest rocket specialists. He was just returning from Africa on that plane after having supervised all preparations for firing a rocket at the moon.”

“That *is* amazing,” said Martia, “but—oh!” She read the rest in Henry’s mind. The rocket carried the world’s first D-C bomb, which letters represented the word, “de-cohesion.” In detonation, the bomb was supposed to liberate the cohesive forces of the proton. They were going to observe its effects on the moon.

“I believe,” said Henry, “that it produced a sustained reaction in stable matter, and the moon blew to fragments, thus creating the Great Ring. The thermal effects plus orbital perturbations of the Earth destroyed all life on the planet. And I deduce that the free oxygen and hydrogen in our atmosphere made

some kind of critical mixture and went *boom!* The result was H<sub>2</sub>O, oceans of it. And so time began again, biologically speaking, anyway."

"If Andrew Dearden or any of his kind get back there and manage to abolish the 'D-C' bomb," said Kimnar, "then Xlarn will never have been, and neither you nor I nor Galactic Civilization, with its myriad worlds and metropoli and billions of star people and all their science and culture, shall have ever evolved. And there you have a difficult question. Is it better for us to relinquish our existence for the sake of a civilization that might have continued, or to preserve a greater one that actually exists *now?*"

**B**EFORE they could bring much concentration to bear upon this weighty problem, a new situation diverted their attention. Inasmuch as the three of them were standing by the transparent wall of the citadel and facing shoreward, they could not help seeing the small industrial city that suddenly sprang into being there. Again, up on the hill, was a great black rocket, its nose pointing toward the threatening sky.

But this was not New Bretania. Nor was it Texania. Nor was there the slightest evidence of any type of conflict or preparations for defense, except in the design of the rocket, itself.

That's a different alternate!"

said Henry, instantly. "The city is different—more heavily industrialized. See the steel mills? It's even futuristic. Those insulator towers and antenna, for some kind of power transmission—"

"And that rocket is different—more efficient looking," observed Martia. "It seems to carry armament. You can see the firing cupolas."

"You're both very calm about it," said Kimnar. "Somebody has found the Chronotron. Come on!"

A moment after they had stepped through the teleporter, leaving the island citadel deserted, the hyperspace receiver began to react to signals. Lights flickered rapidly for several minutes. Then a human voice boomed into the empty dome. It spoke in a strange language, rapidly, urgently. But there was no operator there to reply . . .

When Kimnar, Henry and Martia stepped through the teleporter, they arrived in the circular room they had first visited in the subterranean world of Xlarn.

"There's somebody down here," said Henry.

"They're in that room with the vision screens," added Martia.

Kimnar frowned. "You're right, and I sense that one of them is Weston. Let's have a closer look!"

But already, it seemed, detectors had discovered their presence. In three seconds they heard running footsteps and they saw the tell-tale progression of light advancing to-

ward them along the curved passageway.

Two men came into view, to be followed by a man on crutches who shouldered his way in between them.

"Weston!" exclaimed Martia.

"Dr. Edwards!" Henry cried out. Edwards was the man with the gun—the same gun that Kimnar had used against Mlarn.

The other member of the trio was the Indian Prince, his precious turban now much disheveled and awry.

"Aha!" cried Weston, grinning and leaning on his crutches with a derisive air. "So the wanderers have returned!"

THE Indian Prince ran forward and knelt before Henry, wringing his hands in supplication. In his fat, brown face and his wide, brown eyes was registered an expression of terror and desperation.

"Henry!" he exclaimed. "Only you can give me the answer—it is all so mixed up that I cannot understand. Only you can tell me if it's true!"

"If *what* is true?" asked Kimnar.

"Shut up, Mohammed!" yelled Weston. "Edwards knows what he's doing! Tell them, Edwards!—before you plug 'em!"

Since Edwards held the gun, he took time to explain. In his eyes was a wild sort of triumph.

"I don't know where you three have been," he said, "but in your

absence a great deal has happened. Since young Henry, here, has always exhibited his great intelligence so willingly, perhaps he would corroborate my own deductions—by doing some fast extrapolating!" He said this last word through his teeth. There was a smile on his lips, but not in his dark and wearied eyes.

As he went on rapidly with his story, his three listeners were scanning his mind for the rest of it, putting the whole picture together even before he had finished.

When Weston killed Mlarn, he managed to manipulate controls that finally released all the others from their mental paralysis. He made Lady Dewitt and the Texans show him the location of the Chronotron, and under directions from the various scientists at his command a series of experiments was conducted. Various power settings were utilized, and test groups volunteered or were assigned to be sent back through time. Some, they knew, might arrive in a place where conditions would not be suitable for life. Others might perish in a world populated by carnivorous monsters, or they might freeze, or drown in shoreless oceans. But most of them seemed willing to risk it.

It was Uncle Andy's group that produced the alternate time that the three had witnessed from the citadel. This group had consisted of Andy, Dr. Bauml, Dr. Singer, Valerie Roagland, Peggy Hollenbeck,

and several other men and women. Pee Bee, it developed, had been in the first "group," which had consisted only of himself—as he had apparently been in a suicidal mood and was desirous of giving the dice a roll for double or nothing.

Andy's group, it appeared, had only been thrown back about a thousand years, because the "civilization" they founded was small and still dedicated to the same goals which had been in the minds of the basic group when they entered the Chronotron. These descendants remembered their ancestors and carried some of their theories to the point of physical application.

**I**N the meantime, only Weston, Edwards and the Prince remained below. The alternate time civilization, which referred to itself as "Little America," had appropriated the Xlarnan underworld facilities for itself, and the three observers had found it necessary to conceal themselves. To their dismay, the "Little Americans" had destroyed the Chronotron in order to make certain that none of their group would ever be tempted to snuff them out with a superimposed alternate.

Far from abandoning the idea of returning to the world and time of their ancestors' origin they had concentrated on time-travel theories of their own, with the intention of evolving a more accurate method so that they could be sure of where they were going.

"You said something to me and your Uncle Andy on board the plane before all this happened," Edwards remarked to Henry. "Something about novae and super fast light rays being thrown along the Fourth Coordinate. That must have started them on the road to their present discoveries and development, because there's a ship out there now that only uses rockets for take-off and navigational purposes. Once out in deep space it is supposed to operate on Cosmic energy, or so we have heard. It will go out faster than light. The idea is that when that happens it will be rotated out of three dimensional space and be forced to expend its extra velocity along the Fourth Coordinate, emerging in another time when it again slows down to the speed of light. But this isn't all. These scientists have worked out some new kind of mathematics and seem convinced they have been able to determine the direction and the rates of acceleration and deceleration necessary to deliver them into any given era of time, past or future. And their flight equation calls for the time we came from. Of course, they'll not hit it in the first attempt, but all subsequent time-jumps will be like vernier adjustments, focussing them down into the twentieth century—even that specific part of it they're aiming for."

"You can't let them do it!" exclaimed Kimnar. Weston, Edwards and the Prince stared at him in mild



astonishment.

"I don't know what your objections may be, Scarface," said Edwards, "but as a matter of fact we *don't* intend to let them get away with it!"

Weston grinned sadistically, his gold-capped teeth glistening. "You see—we are going instead! Of course we'll cop their pilot, and he'll do what we tell him. And here's another little point. I'm not so sharp with the science, so Edwards will tell you that, too. Tell them about Africa, Doc!"

THE three listeners tensed. They saw it coming. The "Little Americans" were well aware of Andy's connection with the D-C bomb. Andy, too, had been able to deduce, largely from the lack of ocean tides in this world of Xlarn, that it could have been the bomb that had brought the world of Xlarn into being by the destruction of the moon. The most sacred admonishment to his descendants in alternate time had been to find a way of getting back to the twentieth century and prevent the bomb from being launched. That single act would enable the original Earth civilization to continue, and Xlarn would cease to exist.

"It's all a nice, neat package," said Weston, "because don't forget I worked that French Morocco project, too, and I know how to sabotage that damned rocket! Then to make the whole story turn out

real pretty with a happy ending, we have Mohammed here to pay off like he said, for getting him back home!"

The Prince still looked at Henry, his turban almost down over his eyes. "You have heard!" he cried out. "Tell me, Henry! Can it be done?"

"There's just one little technicality," said Henry. "How do you propose to capture that Cosmic drive rocket outside?"

Weston grinned again, and Dr. Edwards explained. "Our friends upstairs never suspected our existence. They probably assumed we got lost somewhere in the Chronotron. Having had no one to defend themselves against, they have produced no weapons of any description, with the exception of those they have installed on the rocket, for use when they get back to the twentieth century, if necessary, to force the issue concerning the D-C bomb. So they are quite vulnerable to a surprise attack. This gun should do the trick easily enough. It is fully loaded."

"What of their superior numbers?" asked Kimnar. But he read the answer before it was voiced.

"The poor devils were quite aware of the reaction sphere," Edwards answered. "There isn't much time left, you know. They chose their pilgrims, and the rest—"

Martia paled. "All dead!" she exclaimed.

Edwards shrugged. "Euthanasia.

Tragic, perhaps, but very convenient. We only have six men to contend with."

"I don't want to appear too forward about all this," said Kimnar, slipping back into the sarcastic dialect of Scarface, "but we'd like to ride in that star buggy, ourselves. Maybe you can use another hand in your surprise attack?"

Henry and Martia looked at him quizzically, then their brows furrowed in deeper puzzlement as they read the weighty thing that was in his mind.

"To hell with you," yelled Weston. "I owe you something for that lousy deal you gave me on the rock. On second thought, maybe a bullet would be too easy. Maybe you should wait and see the sky blow up. You and the kids wouldn't want to miss all the pretty fireworks, now would you?"

The Prince sprang into action. Swiftly, he took up a position in front of Henry, Martia and Kimnar. Trembling, and with arms outspread, he cried out, "If you leave them, you can leave me, too! Shoot me—anything! But Henry and his friends are sacred! They go, or I stay!"

Dr. Edwards grimaced, looked at his gun, then at Weston. The latter glowered at the Prince, menacingly.

Finally, he muttered an oath that made Martia's face turn crimson. And he added, "What's the difference! We'll take you as excess baggage, but on condition you'll fol-

low orders. Edwards here is going to be awful nervous on that trigger, so don't try anything."

THE surface world was very warm and the sky was sickeningly bright. Vegetation drooped, dried up, dead or dying, and the plant stench of rot was in the degenerating air. In the mind of every sweating human left on Xlarn was one thought:

*It can happen any second now . . .*

Driven by the deadly threat of the sky, Weston and Edwards did not waste time on strategy. They approached the rocket base directly, out in the open, in the glaring light. The pilot and one other man was inside. Four others met them, in mild astonishment, but there was very little time for conversation.

When Weston let them know his intention, and when they looked at Dr. Edwards' gun, they smiled, resignedly.

"What is life or death to us now?" said the spokesman, a somewhat older man than the others. "The main consideration is our common purpose. You, too, want to stop the bomb. And if Doctor Edwards here is, as you say, a prominent authority known to that time, his influence would be greater than ours. As long as you intend to take Kennedy, the pilot, our efforts and sacrifices shall not have been in vain. Go—before it is too late!"

Once at the ladder Weston threw the crutches away and

practically pulled himself up to the airlock with his powerful arms. Edwards followed close behind with his gun, and then came Martia, Henry and Kimnar, who gave the Prince a helping hand as he climbed.

The four on the ground watched silently for five minutes.

Then they saw their colleague, Mark Thixton, climb down out of the rocket. That left Kennedy alone—with those others.

Thixton walked over to his waiting friends. "Seven of them," he said. "The two youngsters will have to share an acceleration sling together." After a long moment he added, "Pray God they make it in time!"

The others said nothing. They only hoped Kennedy would take off fast enough to get through that ravaging pile in the sky. The radiation insulation was excellent in that ship, but they still wondered if escape would be possible.

*It can happen any second now...*

WHEN Martia pulled out of the blackness that she had fallen into during acceleration, she began to cry. Henry could read the thought in her mind. Those brave, kind men back there—left to die.

Then came a disturbing thought from Kimnar who lay in the sling above them: *You realize that we are through the reaction sphere. If they succeed in their purpose, you and I cease to exist. But what really matters is Galactic Civilization!*

*That, too, will evaporate and be non-existent!*

Henry and Martia were too weak to think back at him. But they thought to themselves. Earth, as they had known it, with its teeming billions of people and its cities and sciences and cultures.

*And its wars and nationalisms and ideologies and greed and corruption!* — interposed Kimnar's thought, vehemently.

But its beaches under the blue skies and a real, normal sun, with the children bathing and laughing, and its theatres and arts, its churches and universities and — Paris! Think of Paris! If they could stop the bomb, all that would continue to be—

*I can show you six thousand cities greater than Paris! And if you consider Earth, then think of solar systems—dozens of worlds greater than Earth—more advanced, benevolent, civilized, where men cannot lie and cheat because they know each other's hearts and minds! Weigh all that against one world!*

No—thought Henry, at last. *Consider Earth's own future expansion, if saved from cataclysm. Think of its own possibilities of reaching for the stars and also establishing a Galactic Civilization!*

Kimnar did not respond.

SUDDENLY, Kennedy came out of his straps and yelled. He was looking out the great vision port, from which the radiation shielding

had been removed. Everybody sat up and stared into outer space.

In the lower part of their field vision was the Great Ring that had once been the moon, and below it was the glowing reaction sphere that covered Xlarn. It looked like an incandescent Saturn, with the mighty star-walls of Infinity rising behind it. But even this tremendous spectacle was insignificant in its effect when compared with ten other prominent objects out there.

"Space ships!" shouted Weston. "Where the hell—"

Ten great spheres, with rods at top and bottom and thick rings around their "equators," as though they were space-flying gyroscopes. They were converging slowly upon the rocket.

"Shall I tell you what they are?" asked Kimnar enthusiastically. "They are in the hands of Fate!"

"If you know what they are, don't get corny, Scarface!" roared Weston, climbing out of his sling and grabbing the gun from Edwards. "Spill it!"

Calmly but swiftly, Kimnar told the story, and he explained the issue that hung in the balance—Earth's alternate future against this already existing Galactic Civilization.

"Here and now," he concluded, "Fate can decide. Perhaps it is not in our own hands, after all."

Dr. Edwards stared at him aghast, the whole explanation of Henry's and Martia's precociousness strik-

ing him at last. Then he looked again at the approaching spheres.

"Do they know what we represent?" he asked.

"Yes," smiled Kimnar. "I communicated the message to them some time ago. I thought I was lying to them then, or doing some wishful thinking, merely to make them come for us—but now it's no longer a lie. You *can* stop that moon bomb and strike a new alternate across a billion years of space and time! But if you do, I and my friends and a Galactic Civilization will cease to exist!"

ALL this time, the pilot, Kennedy, had been like a man coming out of anesthesia. He was a tall, gaunt young fellow with heavy, forward jutting brows and far seeing eyes. His long chin was way out as he watched everything and listened, with his wiry right hand lying inertly beside the simple bank of the ship's main controls.

"Kennedy!" yelled Weston. "What kind of guns are in those blisters?"

The pilot stared at him. "They fire one pound projectiles—nuclear bombs."

"*That* is for me! Come on, Edwards! To your station!" Before anyone could stop him, he was swinging lightly away, from support to support, under the gravity free condition of free fall.

"Better strap in tight!" called Kennedy, coming to life at last. "If

I'm going to maneuver out here, you're going to feel some Gs!"

"Let's go!" they heard Weston reply, from his blister. And Edwards was already on his way to the other position.

Grimly, the pilot shifted into emergency flight position and strapped himself in, while Kimnar and Henry and Martia watched him. They heard the Indian Prince stuttering through his prayers again.

"Kennedy," said Kimnar, half rising in his sling. "Don't do it!"

"You better stay strapped," replied the other. Even as he spoke, a great weight pressed upon them and the firmament outside began to revolve, sweeping Xlarn and the star ships momentarily out of sight.

"Kennedy!" persisted Kimnar, doggedly, in spite of the mounting pressure. "Think this over! One world—Earth—cannot be worth twelve civilized solar systems! Let me contact those star men for you! You could continue to live—"

Everybody came close to blacking out as the rocket swept down over the row of globular ships and shook with recoil from Weston's and Edward's firing. A horrifying scene of exploding spheres swept by the observation panels, and Martia screamed in her mixed despair. Kimnar sweated profusely. Henry tensed his mind, preparing to paralyze Kennedy. It was an irresistible impulse, not quite tied to logic.

*No!*—came Kimnar's thought to him. *I have decided against that*

*kind of coercion. There's something bigger out here than we. Call it Fate, if you will. And that power alone will have to decide! We can only propose!*

IT was in that moment that Fate cut the cord. An eye-searing light filled the cabin, and Kennedy shrieked—"The reaction sphere!"

The planet once known as Earth burst into a minor nova, blasting its Great Ring into spiraling shreds and tatters of celestial tinsel. In the face of that swiftly advancing flame, the star ships that had survived the rocket's first onslaught flicked safely into hyper space, and Kennedy *tried* to stand enough Gs of acceleration to keep ahead of it. He barely made it.

But Weston and Edwards did not. At first they were blinded, utterly, by the blast, unprotected as they were in the blisters. Then, as a very small fraction of that searing wave licked out at the rocket, the hull resisted but the blisters fused and exploded. An airlock sealed the gun compartments off from the rocket's cabin, but the remains of the two gunners drifted into the turbulent ether.

There was one other decisive effect of the holocaust. Certain delicate apparatus connected with the collection and storing of Cosmic energy was also fused and made useless, before it had hardly begun to store up for the intended work ahead.

"That does it!" panted Kennedy. "We're licked!"

"No we're not," said Kimnar, nodding toward the observation panel. His tear-flooded eyes were struggling out of the momentarily induced blindness and he saw that the rocket had turned so that the glare of the explosion was not visible.

Instead, there was the towering, eternal firmament, and in it had suddenly materialized one of the star man spheres, glistening brightly in the light that their eyes were now being spared. Kennedy watched it helplessly as it approached.

Henry and Martia became aware of minds probing them gingerly and communing with Kimnar—minds of the star men, who had not struck back immediately because they had been hoping to rescue some of their own kind—and take them home . . .

*WHILE a bewildered but grateful man named Kennedy and a wide-eyed Indian Prince followed Kimnar, Henry and Martia into a scintillating civilization in far off space and time, a secret rocket experiment was being concluded in French Mo-*

*rocco. In the nose of the rocket was a D-C bomb, which was to be detonated on the surface of the moon.*

*No one who had entered the Chronotron, at Weston's insistence, had succeeded in reaching the twentieth century and altering the future by a hair. But Pee Bee had shot far behind the line, landing somewhere in the 8th century B. C. No change in original Cause can ever fail to precipitate an equal degree of change in final Effect. Yet the world that existed between the 8th century B. C. and the twentieth century A. D. was not greatly shaken by having a few lines of print changed here and there in various histories, reference books and encyclopedias. It seemed that there never had been such a word as billiards. There was an ancient game known as pool (Egypt.—puul), the origin of which was not England, but in the glorious imperial days of Ethiopia, when Egypt was one of its provinces and a famous emperor referred to later by Roman historians as Pibeus, invented it to amuse his harem of two hundred wives . . .*

THE END

**FEATURED NEXT MONTH:—**

## **DEEFPREEZE**

By

**ROBERT DONALD LOCKE**

You've become accustomed to seeing terrific new writing talent in the pages of IMAGINATION. Daniel F. Galouye, Alan E. Nourse, and many others testify to this fact. Meet a new candidate for future honors—Robert Donald Locke. His novelette, DEEFPREEZE is a story you don't want to miss!

**RESERVE YOUR JANUARY COPY OF IMAGINATION AT YOUR  
NEWSSTAND — ON SALE NOVEMBER 11**

# ★ Helicopter Frontier ★

ENGINEERS and city-planners never tire of pointing out that modern cities are literally dying of traffic congestion, of a sort of stewing in their own juices. All the super-highways and speedy traffic channels won't help. There are just too many vehicles—and only so much ground space!

The situation is so bad that it can be very clearly shown that ground traffic congestion is causing cities to spread out in ever increasing circles, while the hearts of those cities, with their vast value, simply deteriorate as people refuse to enter them.

A new mode of transportation is appearing on the scene, one which may very well cause as much of a revolution in the other direction as the automobile has caused in this one. A few years ago, the helicopter was still an experimental toy—today it is a vitally necessary tool—and tomorrow?—that's anyone's guess, but from the looks of things, it is going to provide another dimension in transport.

Already helicopters are being used for airport-to-city-core transport. Mail and passengers are shuttled in minutes over distances which once took hours. All that prevents an enormous expansion in "helicopter taxicab" companies is the fact that the military take most helicopters as fast as they're produced. When these marvelous machines can be channeled into civilian pursuits, the face of the land will be changed!

For those pessimistic souls who maintain there are no frontiers but those which can be opened by rock-

ets, or those who feel that the golden age of private enterprise has passed, they need merely consider what the "flying windmills" or the "flying eggbeaters" can do—and act accordingly. Technically, helicopters stand today where the automobile stood in say, 1910. Everyone can see the value of the thing, but how do you get out the bugs?

What is wrong with today's helicopters? They are noisy, inefficient. They vibrate exceedingly, they are difficult to control. They do not have all the speed conceivable. But those same things were once said of automobiles—and now look at them!

The same thing can and will be done with helicopters. Engineers and designers right now are working frantically to design engines suitable for this new machine; the remaining improvements will follow.

What makes the helicopter unique is that it, alone of all transport devices, gives us a three dimensional locus. Up, down, forward, sideways, the helicopter moves equally well in any direction—and at any rate. No other machine can make this claim. As a result no spot on Earth is inaccessible to the helicopter, be it the deepest jungle, the most barren Arctic region, or the mountains of the Himalayas.

When helicopters get into private hands—and that will be soon—a whole world will be changed. Paraphrasing Greeley, the best advice is: "go up, young man, go up"—but do it under spinning blades!

• • •



*Illustrated by H. W. McCauley*



**She had been born ugly and stood little chance of finding herself a handsome husband. But of course, that was before she heard of—**

# CINDERELLA, INC.

*By*

*Harry C. Crosby*

**T**HE girl was sallow and scrawny, her face as unattractive as two pills in a smear of mustard. She squinted up and down the street before she hustled across to a wide doorway under a glowing sign:

CINDERELLA, INC.

She hurried through the door and up to a handsome male attendant standing near a hotel-like desk. "At your service, madame," he crooned.

She fumbled in her pocketbook and brought out a piece of torn tel-escript. She crammed it into his hand. "Can they make *me* look like that?" she demanded.

He unfolded the paper and glanced at the lush advertisement. He smiled, and returned it. "Yes," he said, "but it will be expensive."

"Oh, I've got the money."

He raised his hand in an imperious gesture, and a round purple and gold couch whirled down from above. "Seat yourself, madame, and be borne on your voyage to beauty,"

he said grandiosely. In a sort of mes-meric trance she flopped down on the couch and it whisked away with her.

The couch vaulted through a wide oval opening into a rose colored room ringed with mirrors. From a hidden opening in the ceiling a grayish-green light rayed down on her. "Behold yourself as you are," said a taunting female voice.

The girl glanced with irritation at the mirror. "You don't have to sell me," she snapped, "I know what I look like."

The couch started forward with a jerk and slid toward a mirror, the image enlarging as it approached. The mirror swung up and the couch slid through to halt before a desk in a softly-lit room done in gray. A window looked out over the city. A man in a white coat rose from his desk and offered her a chair facing him. His eyes went over her impersonally. She got up from the

couch and sat down beside the desk.

"What is it you want?" the man asked.

"This," said the girl, and spread the advertisement before him.

He studied the picture for a minute then looked the girl over again. "Stand up, please." She stood up. "Now turn around. Mm-hm . . . Well, sit down." He bridged his hands and looked at her. "I think we can do the body, but I'm not sure of the face. This will cost money. Ah, we insist on a cash payment . . ."

"How much money?" She watched him tensely, opening her pocket-book.

"One hundred thousand."

SHE took out ten crisp bills and spread them on his desk. He nodded, scribbled a receipt, and took her back to the couch. It whirled her out the door and down warm, gaily-lighted perfumed halls to another hotel-like desk where two pretty young girls sat on the counter with their short-skirted legs swinging back and forth. They jumped to their feet and went to the couch. Automatically she showed them the receipt.

"Oh," said one of the attendants, "you've already paid?"

"Yes."

"Well, then we can forget the sales talk." They glanced at the receipt, and their eyes widened. "You get the *full* treatment!" They looked envious.

"Don't you think I need it?" she said coldly. "Why don't we get started?"

"Don't you be nervous," said one of the girls sympathetically. "You'll come out all right. Joanie and me looked almost as bad as you do when we got the treatment." She straightened and turned around slowly, then laughed in vibrant happiness. "And we didn't get the *full* treatment!" They climbed onto the couch and waved to an attendant who sent it whirling down the hall . . .

IT was twenty days before she returned to consciousness, and it was thirty days after that before the doctors and attendants could be sure of the results.

At last she stood in front of the mirror, naked, and saw what she had hoped for. She was, in physical existence, what men with overactive glands and vivid imaginations dream of. She moved sensuously and the male attendants hastily left the room. Her throaty laughter followed them out the door.

Later she was called for her final interview. "Please sit down," said the woman doctor, frowning at a sheaf of papers on the desk. The doctor picked up a clinical photograph and showed it to her. "Do you recognize this woman?"

"Of course," said her sensuous voice. "That was I." She laughed, huskily.

"Quite a transformation. Some-

times I think I'll take the treatment myself." The doctor ran a hand across her face, with the fingers spread out, massaging. "Now you'll admit, there's been quite a change."

"Of course."

"It would be unpleasant to change back."

There was a momentary silence. "Change *back*?"

"Yes, yes, I know," said the doctor, "this sounds like a scene from a horror teleshow. But the fact is that the, er, change was brought about, among other things, with the use of glandular secretions. A few chemicals were even used that don't ordinarily exist in the adult human body. Now our doctors have stabilized your physique as effectively as they can." She shuffled through the papers. "But you'll need to use a jectokit. We have yours here."

She handed across a small cream-colored plastic box. "The directions are indented into the box, so you can't make any mistake if you read them. Your body can store some of these substances for a time, but don't go longer than ten days without them. Don't get cocky. You're a beautiful woman now, but remember, your beauty rests on that little box. After six months, we'll give you a refill, or one of our branch stores will. You're safe, so long as you do as I say." The doctor looked up to see how her listener was taking it. She received a breath-taking smile in return.

"I'm off," said the new beauty,

"to find a man."

"That won't be hard," murmured the doctor a little ruefully.

THE wedding, three months later, was a striking one. The women stared enviously at the tall handsome breadth of the bridegroom, and the men watched the bride with bulging eyes. When the ceremony was over, and the couple occupied the bridal suite for the night, there was a momentary interlude.

"Darling," murmured the bride, "forgive me for a moment. I want to pretty up."

"You're pretty enough to eat," said the groom huskily.

She laughed and slipped past him to the bathroom door with her travel case. "Compose yourself," she smiled, "I'll be out in five minutes."

The groom smiled back. "Five minutes, then."

Once inside, she locked the door and brought out the little yellow plastic box. She clicked open the cover and looked at the photograph snapped inside. "Cinderella, Inc.," said the legend, "*reminds you.*"

"I remember," she said, and began her ritual.

In the bedroom, the groom was in his shirtsleeves whistling and unpacking his suitcase. Suddenly he stopped and stared at a little brown plastic box rolled up in his bathrobe. "By George," he gasped, "I almost forgot."

Hastily, he rolled up his sleeve . . .

# The BEACHCOMBER

By

*Damon Knight*

**Alice saw the Beachcomber as a glorious hunk of man; Maxwell saw him as a super being from the future. Tragically, he was both! . . .**

MAXWELL and the girl started their weekend on Thursday, in Venice. Friday they went to Paris, Saturday to Nice, and on Sunday they were bored. Alice pouted at him across the breakfast table. "Vernon, let's go someplace else," she said.

"Sure," said Maxwell, not too graciously. "Don't you want your bug eggs?"

Alice pushed them away. "If I ever did, I don't now. Why do you have to be so unpleasant in the morning?"

The eggs were insect eggs, all right, but they were on the menu as *oeufs Procyon Thibault*, and three of the half-inch brown spheres cost about one thousand times their value in calories. Maxwell was well paid as a script-writer for the North American Unit Ministry of Information — he bossed a gang of six gagmen on the Cosmic Cocktail show—but he was beginning to hate to think about what

these five days were costing him.

"Where do you want to go?" asked Maxwell. Their coffee came out of the conveyer, steaming and fragrant, and he sipped his moodily. "Want to run over to Algiers? Or up to Stockholm?"

"No," said Alice. She leaned forward across the table and put up one long white hand to keep her honey-colored hair out of her eyes. "You don't know what I mean. I mean, let's go to some other planet."

Maxwell choked slightly and spilled coffee on the tabletop. "Europe is all right," Alice was saying with disdain, "but it's all getting to be just like Chicago. Let's go someplace different for once."

"And be back by tomorrow noon?" Maxwell demanded. "It's ten hours even to Proxima; we'd have just time to turn around and get back on the liner."

Alice dropped her long lashes, contriving to look inviting and sulken at the same time. Not bad at



that, Maxwell thought, for ten o'clock in the morning. "You couldn't get Monday off, I suppose," she said, giving him her A-number-One smile. "We could have so much fun—together . . ."

THEY took the liner to Gamma Tauri IV, the clearing point for the system, then transferred to the interplanet shuttle for Three. Three was an almost undeveloped planet; there were perhaps a hundred cities near the equator, and some mines and plantations in the temperate zones—the rest was nothing but scenery. Maxwell had heard about it from people at the Ministry; he'd been warned to go within a year or so if he went at all—after that it would be as full of tourists as Proxima II.

The scenery was worth the trip. Sitting comfortably on their rented airscooters, stripped to shorts and singlets, with the polarized sunscreens moderating the blazing heat of Gamma Tauri, Maxwell and the girl could look in any horizontal direction and see a thousand square miles of exuberant blue-green foliage.

Two hundred feet below, the tops of gigantic tree-ferns waved spasmodically in the breeze. They were following a chain of low mountains that bisected this continent; the tree-tops sloped away abruptly\* on either side, showing an occasional glimpse of reddish-brown undergrowth, and merged into a sea of

bue-green that became bluer and mistier toward the horizon. A flying thing moved lazily across the clear, cumulus-dotted sky, perhaps half a mile away. Maxwell trained his binoculars on it: it was an absurd lozenge with six pairs of wings—an insect, perhaps; he couldn't tell. He heard a raucous cry down below, not far away, and glanced down hoping to see one of the carnivores; but the rippling sea of foliage was unbroken.

He watched Alice breathing deeply. Maxwell grinned. Her face was shiny with perspiration and pleasure. "Where to now?" he asked.

The girl peered to the right, where a glint of silver shone on the horizon. "Is that the sea, over there?" she asked. "If it is, let's go look for a nice beach and have our lunch."

There were no nice beaches; they were all covered with inch-thick pebbles instead of sand; but Alice kept wanting to try the next place. After each abortive approach, they went up to two thousand feet to survey the shore-line. Alice pointed and said, "There's a nice looking one. Oh! There's somebody on it."

Maxwell looked, and saw a tiny figure moving along the shore. "Might be somebody I know," he said, and focused his binoculars. He saw a broad, naked back, dark against the silvery sea. The man was stooping, looking at something on the beach.

The figure straightened, and Maxwell saw a blazing crest of blond hair, then a strongly modeled nose and chin as the man turned. "Oh-oh," he said, lowering the binoculars.

Alice was staring intently through her binoculars. "Isn't he handsome," she breathed. "Do you know him?"

"Yeah," said Maxwell. "That's the Beachcomber. I interviewed him a couple of times. We'd better leave him be."

Alice kept staring. "Honestly," she said. "I never saw such a—. Look, Vernie, he's waving at us."

Maxwell looked again. The Beachcomber's face was turned up directly toward them. As Maxwell watched, the man's lips moved unmistakably in the syllables of his name.

Maxwell shortened the range, and saw that the Beachcomber was indeed waving. He also saw something he had missed before: the man was stark naked.

"He's recognized me," he said, with mingled emotions. "Now we will have to go down."

**A**LICE took her eyes away from the binoculars for the first time since they had sighted the man. "That's silly," she said. "How could he—Vernon, you don't mean he can see us clearly from that far away?"

Maxwell waved back at the tiny figure and mouthed silently, "Coming right down. Put some pants on, dammit." He said to Alice, "That's not all he can do. Weren't

you listening when I said he's the Beachcomber?"

They started down on a long slant as the little figure below moved toward the jungle's edge. "The who?" said Alice, looking through the binoculars again.

"Watch where you're going," said Maxwell, more sharply than he had intended.

"I'm sorry. Who is he, dear?"

"The Beachcomber. The Man From the Future. Haven't you seen a newscast for the last five years?"

"I only tune in for the sports and fashions," Alice said abstractedly. Then her mouth formed an O. "My goodness! Is *he* the one who—"

"The same," said Maxwell. "The one who gave us the inertialess drive, the anti-friction field, the math to solve the three-body problem, and about a thousand other things. The guy from three million years in the future. And the loneliest man in all creation, probably. This is the planet he showed up on, five years ago, now that I come to think of it. I guess he spends most of his time here."

"But why?" asked Alice. She looked toward the tiny beach, which was now vacant. Her expression, Maxwell thought, said that there were better uses to which he could put himself.

Maxwell snorted. "Did you ever read—" He corrected himself; Alice obviously never read. "Did you ever see one of the old films

about the South Seas? Ever hear of civilized men 'going native' or becoming beachcombers?"

Alice said, "Yes," a trifle uncertainly.

"All right, imagine a man stranded in a universe full of savages — pleasant harmless savages, maybe, but people who are three million years away from his culture. What's he going to do?"

"Go native," said Alice, "or comb beaches."

"That's right," Maxwell told her. "His only two alternatives. And either one is about as bad as the other, from his point of view. Conform to native customs, settle down, marry, lose everything that makes him a civilized man—or just simply go to hell by himself."

"That's what he's doing?"

"Right."

"Well, but what is he combing those beaches *for*?"

Maxwell frowned. "Don't be a cretin. These particular beaches have nothing to do with it; he just happens to be on one at the moment. He's a beachcomber because he lives like a bum—doesn't do any work, doesn't see people, just loaf and waits to be old enough to die."

"That's awful," said Alice. "It's—such a waste."

"In more ways than one," Maxwell added drily. "But what do you want? There's only one place he could be happy—three million years from now—and he can't go back. He says there isn't any place

to go back to. I don't know what he means; he refuses to clarify that point."

THE Beachcomber was standing motionless by the edge of the forest as their scooters floated down to rest on the pebbly beach. He was wearing a pair of stained, weathered duroplast shorts, but nothing else; no hat to protect his great domed head, no sandals on his feet, no equipment, not even a knife at his belt. Yet Maxwell knew that there were flesh-eaters in the jungle that would gobble a man outside the force-field of his scooter in about half a second. Knowing the Beachcomber, none of this surprised him. Whether it occurred to Alice to be surprised at any of it, he couldn't tell. She was eating the Beachcomber with her eyes as he walked toward them.

Maxwell, swearing silently to himself, turned off his scooter's field and stepped down. Alice did the same. *I only hope she can keep from trying to flirt with him*, Maxwell thought. Aloud, he said, "How's it, Dai?"

"All right," said the Beachcomber. Up close he ceased to be merely impressive and became a little frightening. He stood over seven feet tall, and there was an incredible strength in every line of him. His clear skin looked resilient but *hard*; Maxwell privately doubted that you could cut it with a knife. But it was the eyes that were real-



ly impressive: they had the same disquieting, alien quality as an eagle's. Dai never pulled his rank on anybody; he "went native" perfectly when he had to, for social purposes; but he couldn't help making a normal human adult feel like a backward child.

"Dai, I'd like you to meet Alice Zwerling."

The Beachcomber acknowledged the introduction with effortless courtesy; Alice nearly beat herself to death with her eyelashes.

She managed to stumble very plausibly as they walked down to the water's edge, and put a hand on the giant's arm for support. He righted her casually with the flat of his hand on her back—at the same time giving a slight push that put her a step or two in advance—and went on talking to Maxwell.

They sat down by the water's edge, and Dai pumped Maxwell for the latest news on Earth. He seemed genuinely interested; Maxwell didn't know whether it was an act or not, but he talked willingly and well. The Beachcomber threw an occasional question Alice's way, just enough to keep her in the conversation. Maxwell saw her gathering her forces, and grinned to himself.

There was a pause and Alice cleared her throat. Both men looked at her politely. Alice said, "Dai, are there really man-eating animals in this jungle? Vernon says so, but we haven't seen a one, all the time we've been here. And—" Her gaze

ran down the Beachcomber's smooth, naked torso, and she blushed very prettily. "I mean—" she added, and stopped again.

The Beachcomber said, "Sure, there are lots of them. They don't bother me, though."

She said earnestly, "You mean—you walk around, like that, in the jungle, and nothing can hurt you?"

"That's it."

Alice drove the point home. "Could you protect another person who was with you, too?"

"I guess I could."

Alice smiled radiantly. "Why, that's too good to be true! I was just telling Vernon, before we saw you down here, that I wished I could go into the jungle without the scooter, to see all the wild animals and things. Will you take me in for a little walk, Dai? Vernon can mind the scooters—you wouldn't mind, would you, Vernie?"

MAXWELL started to reply, but the Beachcomber forestalled him. "I assure you, Miss Zwerling," he said slowly, "that it would be a waste of your time and mine."

Alice blushed again, this time not so prettily. Just what do you mean?" she demanded.

Dai looked at her gravely. "I'm not quite such a wild man as I seem," he said. "I always wear trousers in mixed company." He repeated, with emphasis. "*Always.*"

Alice's lips grew hard and thin,

and the skin whitened around them. Her eyes glittered. She started to say something to the Beachcomber, but the words stuck in her throat. She turned to Maxwell. "I think we'd better go."

"We just got here," Maxwell said mildly. "Stick around."

She stood up. "Are you coming?"

"Nope," said Maxwell.

Without another word she turned, walked stiffly to her scooter, got in and soared away. They watched the tiny shining speck dwindle and disappear over the horizon.

Maxwell grinned and looked at the Beachcomber. "She had that coming," he said. "Not that she's out anything—she's got her return ticket." He put a hand behind him to hoist himself to his feet. "I'll be going now, Dai. Nice to have —"

"No, stay a while, Vern," said the giant. "I don't often see people." He looked moodily off across the water. "I didn't spoil anything special for you, I hope?"

"Nothing special," Maxwell said. "Only my current light o' love." The giant turned and stared at him, half-frowning.

"What the hell!" said Maxwell disgustedly. "There are plenty of other pebbles on the beach."

"Don't say that!" The Beachcomber's face contorted in a blaze of fury. He made a chopping motion with his forearm. Violent as it was, the motion came nowhere near Maxwell. Something else, some-

thing that felt like the pure essence of wrath, struck him and bowled him over, knocking the breath from him.

He sat up, a yard away from the giant, eyes popping foolishly. "Whuhh—" he said.

There was pain and contrition in the Beachcomber's eyes. "I'm sorry," he said. He helped Maxwell up. "I don't often forget myself that way. Will you forgive me?"

Maxwell's chest was still numb; it was hard to breathe. "Don't know," he said with difficulty. "What did you do it for?"

Sunlight gleamed dazzlingly on the Beachcomber's bare head. His eyes were in deep shadow, and shadows sketched the bold outline of his nose, marked the firm, bitter lines of his mouth. He said, "I've offended you." He paused. "I'll explain, Vernon, but there's one condition—you must never tell anybody else, ever."

He put his big hand on Maxwell's wrist, and Maxwell felt the power that flowed from him. Almost hypnotically he knew he never would be able to. He was aware his mind was being schooled in what to remember.

"All right," said Maxwell. A curious complexity of emotions boiled inside him—anger and petulance, curiosity and something else, deeper down: a vague, objectless fear. "Go ahead."

The Beachcomber talked. After a few minutes he seemed almost to forget Maxwell; he stared out across

the silver sea, and Maxwell, half hypnotized by the deep, resonant voice, watched his hawklike profile in silence.

Dimly, he saw the universe the Beachcomber spoke of: a universe of Men set free. Over that inconceivable gap of time that stretched between Maxwell's time and theirs, they had purged themselves of all their frailties. Maxwell saw them striding among the stars, as much at home in the pitiless void as on the verdant planets they loved. He saw them tall and faultless and strong, handsome men and beautiful women, all with the power that glowed in the Beachcomber, but without a hint of his sadness.

HE tried to imagine what the daily life of those people must be like, and couldn't; it was three million years beyond his comprehension. But when he looked at the Beachcomber's face, he knew that the last men were human beings like himself, capable of love, hate, and despair.

"We had mating customs that would seem peculiar to you," said the Beachcomber after a while. "Like elephants—because we were so long-lived, you know. We—married—late, and it was for life. My marriage was about to take place when we found the enemy."

"The enemy?" said Maxwell. "But—didn't you say you were the only dominant life-form in the whole universe?"

"That's right." The Beachcomber outlined an egg-shaped figure with a motion of his cupped hands, caressingly. "The universe; all of it. Everything that existed in this space. It was all ours. But the enemy didn't come from this universe."

"Another dimension?" Maxwell asked.

The Beachcomber looked puzzled. "Another—" he said, and stopped. "I thought I could say it better than that in English, but I can't. Dimension isn't right—call it another time-line; that's a little closer."

"Another universe like ours, co-existent with this one, anyhow," said Maxwell.

"No—not the same as ours, at all. Different laws, different—" he stopped again.

"Well, can you describe the enemy?"

"Ugly," said the Beachcomber promptly. "We'd been searching other—dimensions, if you want to use that word—for thousands of years, and this was the first intelligent race we found. We hated them on sight." He paused. "If I drew you a picture, it would look like a little spiny cylinder. But a picture wouldn't convey it. I can't explain." His mouth contracted with distaste.

"Go on," said Maxwell. "What happened? They invaded you?"

"No. We tried to destroy them. We broke up the crystal spiderwebs they built between their worlds;

we smashed their suns. But more than a quarter of them survived our first attack, and then we knew we were beaten. They were as powerful as we were, more so in some ways—"

"Wait, I don't get it," said Maxwell unbelievably. "You—attacked them—without provocation? Wiped out three-quarters of them, simply because—"

"There was no possible peace between us and them," said the Beachcomber. "And it was only a matter of time before they discovered us; it was simply chance that we made the contact first."

What would an unspoiled South Sea Islander have made of the first atomic war? Maxwell wondered. Morals of one society didn't apply to another, he knew. Still—was it possible that the Beachcomber's people, Maxwell's own descendants, still had a taint of the old Adam? And was it accident that they were the only dominant life-form in the entire universe, or had they eliminated all other contenders?

**N**OT for him to judge, he decided; but he didn't like it. He said, "Then what — they counterattacked?"

"Yes. We had time to prepare, and we knew what they were going to do. The trouble was, there simply was no defense against it." He noticed Maxwell's wry smile. "Not like the planet-busters; there is a defense against those, you just

haven't found it yet. But there actually was no defense whatever against their weapon. They were going to destroy our universe, down to the last quantum—wipe it right out of the series, make a blank where it had been."

"And—?" said Maxwell. He was beginning to understand why the Beachcomber had never told this story to anyone else; why the public at large must never know it. There was a feeling of doom in it that would color everything men did. It was possible, he supposed, to live with the knowledge that the end of it all was death, but fatalism was the mark of a dying culture.

"And there was just one thing we could do," said the Beachcomber. "Not a defense, but a trick. At the instant before their weapon was due to take effect, we planned to bring our universe back three million years along its own time-line. It would vanish, just as if it had been destroyed. Then, if it worked, we'd be able to return, but on a different time-line — because, obviously, on our own line nothing like this doubling-back had already happened. Changing the past changes the future; you know the theory."

"Yeah. So—you were too late, is that it? You got away, but all the rest were destroyed."

"The timing was perfect," said the Beachcomber. "All the calculations were perfect. There's a natural limit to the distance in time any mass can travel, and we man-

aged to meet it exactly. Three million years. I wish we hadn't. If we hadn't, I could go back again—" He stopped, and his jaw hardened.

"There isn't much more to tell," he said. "I happened to be chosen to execute the plan. It was a great honor, but not an easy one to accept. Remember, I was about to be married. If anything went wrong it meant that we'd be separated forever . . . We couldn't even die together. But I accepted. I had one day with her—one day; and then I set up the fields and waited for the attack. Just one micro-second before it would have reached us, I released the energy that was channeled through me—and the next instant, I was falling into the ocean out there."

He turned a tormented face to Maxwell. "It was the worst possible luck!" he said. "You can see for yourself, there was less chance of my landing anywhere near a planet than of—finding one given pebble on all the beaches of this

planet."

Maxwell felt as if he had missed the point of a joke. "I still don't understand," he said. "You say *you* landed—but what about the universe? Where did it—?"

The Beachcomber made an impatient gesture. "You don't think we could bring it back into a space it already occupied, do you? It was in stasis, all but a fraction out of this time-line. Just a miniature left, so that it could be controlled. A model of the universe, so big." He spread his thumb and forefinger an inch apart—"Just a pebble."

Maxwell's jaw dropped open. He stared at the giant. "You don't mean—you—"

"Oh, yes," said the Beachcomber, "I landed about twenty miles out from shore — five years ago." He stared out across the sea, while his fingers groped nervously among the pebbles at his feet.

"And when I hit the water," he said, "I dropped it."

THE END

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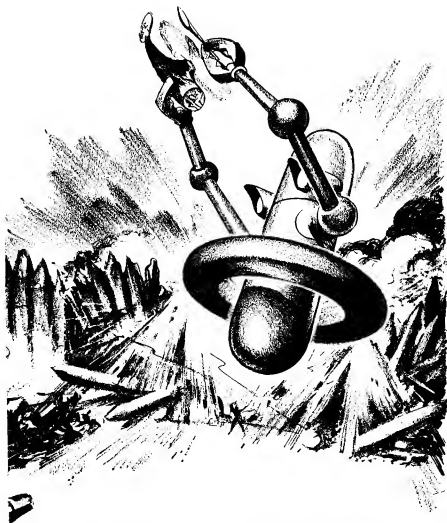
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# THE TOY

*by Kris Neville*

**Neju did not hate the God-men, but he did hate the metal demons they used to destroy his people. So he prayed to the Old Gods for aid . . .**





**"I** hate to leave."

" . . . But the time has come."

"I suppose so . . . but mamma?"

"Yes?"

"May we leave them a present?"

"What, my child, what could they want for?"

" . . . I don't know: surely there's something. One of my toys or something. I'd like to leave them something."

*"That's very thoughtful, but . . ."*

*"Please, mamma."*

*"Perhaps we could."*

*"They might find use for a toy, someday."*

*"Might they, child? Well . . . Who knows? Perhaps they might."*

THE night, starry, cold, clear, was around them, unfriendly. The natives huddled at the edge of the clearing and stared out at the stockade. There was movement there — two sentries, abreast, threading their way in and out of shadows. The moonlight was pale and uncertain, blending away harshness, distorting, enlarging. The night was still. One of the natives let himself down until he lay flat upon the ground. A twig crackled sharply, and the other four held their breath, but the sound did not carry to the sentries. Another and another and another lay down near the first, and then all of them began to inch their way slowly through the tall swift growing grasses toward the stockade.

Their progress was slow; every few minutes they paused until their breathing returned to normal. The light, sunset shower had not softened the ground, for it was in the middle of the dry season when the rain fell sparingly. After tedious, hard gained feet, sweat stood glistening on their nearly naked bodies and grass shoots, saw edged, itched and stung their skins. Rough top roots and sharp, brutal rocks reddened them in welts and bruises.

Still they went forward, slowly, doggedly. The moon fell away toward the horizon, and the shadows unhooded from trees and the stockade wall and stretched out on the grasses.

With clock-like precision the sentries passed along the narrow walk atop the wall. The wall was made of *conje* trunks, sheered of limbs, driven upright into the ground, pressed so closely together that between logs there was scarcely a chink. For the people inside the stockade, aided by a howling demon of steel that uprooted and stripped trees effortlessly, it had been scarcely the work of a day; for the natives outside, depending for power upon their own muscles it would represent the year's work of a village.

Each time the sentries passed the spot nearest the natives, they pressed hard to the ground and held their breath for fear some tiny, artificial movement would reveal them.

The moon hovered on the far tree tops and then vanished from sight, leaving a curtain of night, faintly star-dotted.

The five natives were at the edge of the grasses. Beyond them, to the stockade wall, there was no protection. As one they straightened and ran fleetly to the *conje* trunks. Under their feet, a few pebbles crunched and rattled. They pressed in against the wall, merging with the darker shadow of it, waiting for the sentries to pass. The heavy booted footfalls became loud-



er and louder, until they came from directly overhead. The natives hugged the wall, praying silently to their alien Gods, and the footfalls slowly emptied into silence.

One of the five sent exploring hands over the wooden surface. It was rough enough for his purpose, and awkwardly, hesitantly, he began to work his way upward. Once bark peeled from under his foot and fell away, but it was caught and silenced by one of those below. He drew himself over the top of the wall with a swift, sure movement, and dropped the two feet to the walk on the other side. He crouched there, fumbling with the coil of rope at his waist.

It was a slender, moist rope, and, as he cast the end over the wall, it slithered through his hand like a line of liquid. He could hear the muffled approach of feet, and his heart beat faster. Hurriedly he expanded the slip loop in the end of the rope. He placed the loop over one of the trunks and forced it down between those on each side. It was a tight fit, and he had to jerk it savagely once. That done, he pulled it tight and slipped over the wall, looping the rope in his hand to support himself. Almost immediately the sentries were overhead.

The rope began to slip down the pole; it slipped an inch and jerked; two inches. His muscles stood out, bulging the skin. He closed his eyes.

There were voices above. The rope

slipped again, and then the knot began to peel. In another moment, the rope would give way and the native would crash loudly to the ground. The foot steps began again, but only one pair now. Somewhere above in the silence a sentry was waiting. The sentry, unconcerned, lit his pipe and the match flare made those below catch their breaths. The rope slipped again.

In desperation, the native threw one arm over the wall. He glanced down fearfully. Then cautiously he drew himself up. In the pale star shine he could see that the sentry was not facing him. He dropped to the inside walk. The sentry half-turned.

Reluctantly, the native leaped the few intervening feet and hit him. There was a brittle snap and the native lowered the sentry gently to the walk. Then he turned, relooped the rope, pulled it more securely around the trunk. Up came the four who had been waiting below.

In a whispery hiss, he explained what had happened. The leader of the group shook his head in the darkness. "If we go inside, now," he said, "the other will discover this one and then warn the demon before we can destroy it. We must silence the other one too."

They nodded.

One of the group bent and removed the fallen sentry's weapon. He turned it over and over in his hands, curiously.

"Hey! Hey!" the other sentry

called, suddenly, from out of the darkness along the wall. "Hey, Ed!" Receiving no answer, he fumbled his weapon into his hand. "Hey! Ed! Answer me!"

"Too late," the leader of the natives hissed. "He will wake the demon. Run!"

They vaulted the wall, striking the ground and scattered toward the tall grasses and the forest beyond. One dragged a broken leg painfully.

The body of Ed, the limp sentry, teetered for a moment on the walk and then slipped awkwardly over the side. It struck a wall buttress and bent over it like a horse-shoe.

The other sentry rushed to the corner. One glance was enough to tell him what had happened. He grabbed the huge spotlight at the juncture of the two walls and tripped the button. Inside the stockade a generator whined and the arc of the lamp flared its sunbright blue.

The beam was temporarily blinding, and the sentry cursed. Then his field of vision came clear, and all the details of the grassy stretch were etched sharply. He saw two running figures, each at the outer edge of the beam. He swiveled the light until it focused upon the nearest one.

It was the leader — the one with the broken leg — and he froze in the light. He did not even attempt to fall to the ground.

The sentry stared for a fraction of

a second before he could bring his gun to eye level and fire it.

The leader of the natives waited, blinking his faceted orange eyes in the cruel blinding glare. The eyes glistened brightly. The four arms hung motionless, relaxed at his side.

The sentry shuddered involuntarily as the leader came within his sights. He squeezed the trigger and a burst of hissing flame came from the muzzle. The flame died in the air and the gun jumped in recoil.

The projectile struck and the leader screamed in pain. He twitched but he did not fall. One hand shot out to support himself, but still his eyes blinked into the light and still he remained upright, a perfect target.

The sentry fired twice more, one projectile kicking up a tiny shower of rocks and moaning away, almost spent; the other, scoring in the target.

The native in the field whined. But still he did not fall.

Shuddering, the sentry fired time after time at him, and finally, very slowly, the native crumpled to the ground. Once or twice the tip of the tail twitched and then the body was absolutely motionless.

The sentry swung the light again. The other natives were gone. He shuddered again and spat out toward the body.

Lights in the stockade began to come on, sucking at the tiny generator. They were dim lights.

Looking down, the sentry saw his

companion lying across the buttress.

The sentry began to curse nervously. Then, with fumbling fingers, he shut off the arc lamp and the lights inside the stockade brightened.

The sentry glanced out at the vast alien darkness beyond the wall. He whimpered in sudden, childish fear.

**W**ITHIN the forest, beyond the terrifying brilliance of the stockade light, the natives stopped running. After the light went off, they called to each other with piping, night bird whistles. Slowly they came together, forming a silent lonely group.

"We must leave him there," one said, in the shrill, chattering native language.

Reluctantly they turned their backs on the stockade. Leaves cracked under their feet. Branches whipped at their faces, bringing sharp tears. They hurried, and dry things rustled and startled animals fled. From time to time they grunted at each other, more for encouragement, more as protest against the tangle of vines than for communication. Neju carried the stolen stockade weapon pressed tightly to his chest.

On they went, and finally the sun came up, penetrating the forest here and there, sending sharp rays of new light mottling the ground. Once they stopped to rest, but only for a short time.

After two hours of sun they came to the natural clearing and the tribal village.

The village was a crude thing by stockade standards. It was a cluster of mud and stick houses around the central more pretentious Chieftan's lodge. Before the lodge there was the large fireplace where the community roasted the hunters' kills on three huge spits. The ground around the fireplace was smooth and covered with white sand taken from the bottom of the fast running creek that at the far left of the clearing threaded its way off into the tangle of trees. Bones and other refuse were carried in reed baskets to a pit well back in the forest away from the clearing. The whole of the village was clean and orderly, and, in back of the lodge, there was a patch of flower-like plants most of which were dead with autumn and frost.

Several meat animals were staked out near the stream and two tiny domesticated aboreal animals called *corlieu* sat before their owners' huts, in the sunshine.

When the four natives stepped into the clearing, all other activity ceased. Children broke off their cries, and adults turned from their labors. A great silence fell upon the village. Natives appeared at doors.

Slowly the four walked toward the lodge; one limped slightly from a thorn in his naked foot. All eyes turned to mark their progress.

The Chieftain sat at the door of his lodge. Upon their funeral-like approach, he rose. He stared at each one in turn as if trying to believe one of them were someone else. Then

he shifted his eyes over their heads to the spot in the forest where they had emerged.

Neju shook his head slowly and the Chieftain seemed to retreat as if from an invisible blow; then he stood erect, gestured that they should enter, and followed them in.

**S**LOWLY, outside, movement began again. There was a floating whisper of soft words and the children moved gravely about. Even the *corlieus* seemed to sense the change and did not try to attract attention. Overhead, a great bird flapped by.

Inside the lodge the four arranged themselves differentially at their Chieftain's feet.

The Chieftain was old. His arms were loose shells of skin over bone and his face was pinched with wrinkles; even the eyes were misty and bluish with age. And his voice, when he broke the silence, was thin and querulous.

"You have returned," he said.

The four remained quiet, sitting with their legs coiled under them as pillows. After a while, Neju answered, "Yes, we have returned."

The ritual question and answer gave the old Chieftain time to get his emotions under control; his eyes were clouded with grief, and his head bobbed loosely on his skinny neck. And then: he was unsure as to why there were tears in his eyes.

"He will not join us," Neju said quietly.

The old one sighed and rubbed a

wrinkled hand over his face.

Outside, the mourners began their chant, slow, terrifying. A distant drum picked up the beat and throbbed out the heart-rhythm.

"We took one of the weapons," Neju said. "But we were prevented from entering their village."

The old one nodded. He closed his eyes and turned his face toward the ceiling of the lodge. He was tired; it was odd, how suddenly tired. Yesterday there had been . . . no, that was not yesterday. His son coming up from the stream with his first catch. The air had been bright (it was no longer bright any more) and he had laughed, saying . . . But now there was something about a demon somewhere, wasn't there? A fearsome thing. It was hard to believe in demons; yes, and in Gods, too. That summer when *his* father pointed to the moon being eaten by shadow, he had believed in Gods, then. He must tell his grandson about that. It was very strange. And there was an old ritual one should make when the drought came . . .

"Here, their weapon . . ."

The old one opened his eyes once more. His young friend, Neju, was handing him a strange thing. He marveled at it, thinking that perhaps the Gods had left it when they went away.

"It is dangerous."

The old one was trying to think. There was something about the new Gods who had come down from the

sky; but they brought demons with them, so perhaps they were not Gods at all and it was quite confusing, being old. He must remember to ask his grandson to tell him all about it. They placed the weapon before him and rose, making their bows, and left him in peace.

He stared at the weapon for many minutes. His grandson, Zoon — no, Zoon had been his son — his grandson's name was — was — ah — Zoe, yes. A little child.

An odd thing, what weapon, and perhaps . . . No, it was not for spring planting. And winters used to be longer: we plant earlier — a moon earlier, now, at least. And Zoe was a grown man, and Zoon was dead. Or was it the other way around?

He blinked his eyes, and strangely, it seemed that they were *both* dead. They were playing the funeral dirge out there in the sunshine.

The old one stirred uneasily.

NEJU sat on the white sand before the fire place. Two of his hands plucked nervously at the sliver of wood. A group of hunters formed a semicircle around him.

"The old Father is ill with sorrow," he said, after a while. "And with time."

The others nodded, and again the hunters' council fell silent. The rest of the village was muted, and the women went about gathering funeral offerings for their Chieftain.

Neju studied the splinter, trying

to focus his thoughts on it. Finally he said, "We did not destroy the demon."

"We must try again," one of the hunters said, and like a tired sigh, agreement ran from mouth to mouth.

Neju flipped the splinter into the ashes and sat with eyes downcast.

"The demon must be destroyed," the hunter repeated. "Or it will kill again and again."

Neju stared across the fireplace at the forest beyond. His eyes clouded.

On his right, a young hunter who had been with him the previous night at the wall cleared his throat nervously. "They come from the sky, but they are not Gods." He wrinkled his brow as if this were difficult to understand. "It is strange," he said. "They come like Gods, but they are not. Gods are kind." He looked appealing at Neju.

Neju smiled wearily and touched the young hunter on the shoulder. "They are not Gods."

"They are servants of the demon," another hunter insisted. "I was there," he said monotonously. "After they came."

The others stirred uneasily.

"We watched the demon," the hunter said, his voice still flat, as if (although he knew them to be true) he could not quite believe the words himself. "I was with Mela. We watched the demon go to the forest and rip out a standing tree by the roots. Then trembling, Mela stepped out to greet it with a friend-

ship offering. And the demon turned on her and roared down on her and mashed her body lifeless under it, and the god-man who was astride the demon became so terrified that he seemed to laugh. I fled."

There was silence for a moment.

"The Old Gods," one hunter began, but he did not finish the sentence.

The hunters shuffled.

"I saw the demon kill Mela," the hunter said with finality. "We must kill the demon."

The young hunter cleared his throat again. "They are not Gods, but still I should not have harmed the god-man, last night, at the wall. We do not mean them any harm." He paused. "Only the demon."

The hunters nodded.

"They will thank us for destroying the demon."

"The god-men, themselves, have killed four of us," Neju said suddenly.

"They cannot help themselves," the young hunter insisted. "They must do the demon's will." He paused again. They cannot be gods, to obey the demon, but we should not harm them."

Suddenly the funeral drum ceased in mid-note.

THE village began to stir uncertainly, and a native burst, running, upon the clearing. He was crying something in an excited voice. A wail went up from those nearest him, and each ran off toward his

house. A young lad sped toward the seated hunters.

When he arrived, he was panting. "A demon comes! *Is is in the air like a bird!*"

The hunters glanced at Neju for leadership. Then, from a great distance, they heard a whirring like the beat of giant wings.

"Run!" Neju cried, and they scrambled to their feet.

"Separate and run!" Neju cried.

The other villagers were scattering toward the forest in all directions. Neju glanced around him. He saw a female stop, rush back, scoop up a child who had been playing with a polished bone. Then, almost as if by magic, the village was empty. The staked animals began to whine, and one of the *corlieu* at the far edge of the clearing gave a gigantic leap and disappeared into the tightly woven branches.

Then Neju turned to run and the sound of the air demon was nearer. But he had taken only two or three steps before he stopped, frozen, for a single instant. Then he turned and sped toward the Chieftain's lodge.

No one had warned the old Father.

At the moment he reached the door of the lodge, the helicopter burst upon the clearing. Neju darted it one frightened glance and then ducked through the doorway.

The old one still sat as Neju had left him, motionless, staring at the strange weapon before him. He did not even look up when Neju entered.

"Come, Father," Neju said very

gently.

"Eh?"

Neju glanced over his shoulder. The sky demon was heading straight for the lodge.

Very tenderly, Neju drew the old one to his feet. He wrapped two arms around his body, protectively. "We must hurry, Father."

The old one blinked, but he moved as Neju urged, and the two of them stepped from the back entrance of the lodge. The helicopter was flying low, and it seemed almost on top of them.

It was then that the Chieftain saw it. There was fear and wonder in his eyes.

"We must run!" Neju said.

Together they trampled across the dying garden, their feet moving rapidly, and the old one's breath came in sharp rasps.

Then the very edge of the helicopter's shadow touched them.

And there was a blinding light and a great wave of air that threw them to the ground like a giant hand, and there was a roar greater than the northern cataracts. And the sound and light was gone, but still their ears rang with the thunder of it and their eyes pained.

Ahead of them there was another roar. And a group of huts seemed to come apart from quick flashes inside of them. Bits of the lodge plopped down on their backs, and one huge piece of timber embedded in the earth only a foot from Neju's body.

Neju threw himself over the old Chieftain to protect him; he felt dirt and sticks and dust shower over him and the air smelled sharp and bitter and stifling.

*Wham! Wham! Wham!*

The earth jarred with explosions, one after another, measured, methodical. Neju gritted his teeth and closed his eyes tightly.

And the world was light and noise and flying debris.

Then it was over. Neju was holding his breath. For several minutes, he did not dare lift his head; his ears rang and his head was weighted. He brushed at it, and his hand came away wet with blood.

He looked up, and the air demon was gone.

The lodge was no more — only a smoking crater, and, except for two huts, miraculously intact, all of the village was mashed flat as though a giant hammer had worked it over carefully.

Neju bent to the Chieftain. The old one moaned.

THEY constructed a crude shelter for the Chieftain back of the clearing, fast in the forest, where the old one could not see the scene of destruction. All that night, almost fearfully, the villagers crouched near him. When the moon first dropped its rays across his face they all tensed, hushed, waiting, and when his breathing continued they sighed in relief (for he would live another day: a Chieftain's spirit always goes

up the first moon path to the stars, or else it will not leave until the moonpath comes again).

The night was long and cold, and toward dawn, they drew in upon each other and the fire for warmth.

When the sun was an hour high and the hasty meal was over the young hunters surrounded Neju, looking to him for leadership since the last of the royal line lay in a coma.

"You will be our leader until our Chieftain Father is well again," they told Neju, one after another.

Neju sat for a long time in thought and silence. At least he said, almost sadly, "I will serve until the old Father is well again."

There was a relieved sigh from the listeners.

Again there was a long silence.

Neju toyed with a new grass shoot, rubbing it between his fingers. He rumbled deep in his chest to break the silence. "We must move further into the forest. Wait for the god-men and the demons to go away. We cannot fight."

"Perhaps they will not go away."

Neju thought about this. "The Old Gods came from the sky," he said. "The Old Gods went away." He looked around him at the circle of taut, angry faces. "I do not like to give up our home ground," he said slowly. He shrugged helplessly. "With two demons, one to watch while the other sleeps, how can we steal near enough to destroy them?" He looked at the mashed grass

shoot. "The earth is kind. We can live and be happy in some new place."

A hunter slipped out of the brush near Neju, scarcely rustling it. Neju turned his head and the hunter bent and whispered in his ear. Neju looked suddenly concerned and frightened. He stood up, motioning for the others to keep their seats. He turned and followed the hunter into the forest.

THEY threaded their way toward what was left of their village. Near the edge of the natural clearing, the hunter hissed and began to advance cautiously.

When they both stood looking out from behind a clump of *clato*, Neju saw a group of the god-men in the middle of the wrecked village; the god-men were poking around idly, kicking rubble, fingering this and that. They talked. Their voices were, to Neju, slow, low pitched, lazy. Neju held his breath, watching.

Finally one of the god-men, seemingly the leader, started toward the very spot where they were standing.

Neju and his companions drew back hastily, and their movements rustled a dew heavy bush, causing it to shower a spray of water on the dead leaves of the ground.

Almost immediately, there was the deadly hiss of the leader's weapon, and a projectile thudded into a tree, just to the left of Neju.

"I saw two of them! Over here!" the leader called, running heavily



toward the forest. The other god-men galvanized into action.

"Let's hide," Neju's companion whimpered, terrified.

"No! They'd find us. Follow me." Neju started off, skirting the clearing, going away from the direction of the villagers' temporary camp.

The god-men fired four times in the direction of their flight. The shots came at short, measured intervals, and they struck in a fan-like arc. The nearest one snapped by Neju's ear with a loud popping noise.

"This way!" the god-man cried excitedly crashing after his prey. He was joined by the others, all running heavily, and the air was filled with their coarse explosive curses.

Neju and the hunter ran for what seemed a long time, the noise of pursuit still loud behind them. Then the noise ceased.

Neju stopped, puzzled, breathing heavily. On the other side of a small clump of viny *scarbj*, there was the sound of god-men's voices.

"They might be leading us into a trap," the one said.

There was assent.

"They must be near. I don't hear 'em runnin' any more. Over that way. Let's spray that whole damn section!"

Their weapons began to hiss.

Neju instinctively dropped flat to the ground. In following his lead, the hunter coughed once, a projectile catching him in the chest even as he was dropping. Blood gurgled

in his throat.

"That's one, by God!" one of the god-men cried in elation, and after another barrage of increased violence, they began to withdraw, nervously, darting glances at the quiet trees around them.

Neju remained motionless. Then, leaving his dead comrade, he set off at a lope in the direction of the makeshift camp.

When he arrived the villagers were still huddled fearfully together.

Neju walked to the circle of young hunters. "They killed Whenj just now," he said without preamble.

He sat down.

"Come here!" he said. "I want you all to come here!"

Slowly the natives gathered around him.

"Sit down."

They sat down, and Neju waited until they quieted. There was fear and uncertainty in the air; mothers darted anxious glances in the direction of their sons.

NEJU began to speak. He spoke slowly. "I have just seen the god-men chase and kill. They are controlled by demons that cannot be appeased. One has only to hear them — the hate in their voices — to know." He swallowed and looked around at the green brilliant foliage and listened to the life movements in the trees. "I said that we should move away into the forest . . . But now . . . I cannot think like a demon, but I somehow see that . . .

unlike the Old Gods . . . the demons will not leave us to the world in peace. They are creatures of hate, who will hunt us out, little by little, and destroy us all . . . " He looked around at the frightened faces. "They will build more and bigger villages for their servants, the god-men. They will strip away our forests and burn our grasses. They will kill our food and destroy our homes wherever they find them. They will trample our gardens. They will force us back and ever further back until we have no place left to go . . . And only after they have killed us all, only then, will the demons be satisfied and leave our world . . . That is what I see."

The rest, terrified, waited.

"I am your Chieftain while the Father is ill. Yet, I cannot command you in this. What shall we do? Shall we flee to live in fear, or . . . ?"

There was a sad little moan from the women.

"One demon," Neju said, "we might have killed. But I do not know how many demons there are."

The men moved nervously.

Finally one said, very softly, "If there are a hundred, we must not flee."

Assent muttered among them.

"Very well," Neju said. He stood up. "I will go see the Father. He must guide me in my actions now. Perhaps he can recall a weapon to fight demons with. Perhaps the destruction of the village will help him

to think."

From the distance there was the great beat of demon wings on the air.

Neju went to the old one. He frowned at the woman who had been assigned to care for him. She stood, bowed, and withdrew.

Neju sat down beside the Father.

"Father," he said softly. "Father, can you hear me?"

The Chieftain moved his head wearily; his lips opened slowly. "Yes," he whispered.

"We must destroy great demons. We must have the help of the Old Gods. What must we do, Father? You could not remember when Zoeë asked you. Can you remember now?"

The Chieftain lay silent for a long time. A tiny insect crawled unnoticed over one wrinkled arm. He had heard the question but somehow the sense had gone out of the words. The Old Gods — did he believe in Old Gods? Was that the question?

HE tried to remember: Old Gods had come from the sky — but that had been long ago. His father had seen them — no, no — grandfather, wasn't it? Or even further back than that? The Chieftain imagined the stars, which were bright souls in the sky, and had the Old Gods really come down from the sky at all? Maybe no one had ever seen them: maybe it was a dream, there were so many dreams. Here he was dreaming that he was old,

and only yesterday his mother had whipped him for going so near the *yeama* Zaptl had staked out over at the base of the hill. Or was it yesterday?

"We must have the Old Gods' help," Neju repeated quietly.

The Old Gods' help? He tried to remember. There had been something — a dance — a ritual — a chant, hadn't there?

"For the killing of demons."

The Chieftain was tired. It seemed that there was something important to remember. Hadn't . . . What was it?

"Please, Father."

The old one wished the voice would go away because he was sleepy. *Wasn't that the moonlight on his face?*

"Pray," he said, dying.

After a time, Neju stood up. The Chieftain was very quiet.

He left the side of the dead and turned to the female waiting a short distance away. "After the moon has taken his soul tonight, prepare him for the funeral. His soul is very quiet as it waits. And there is no need to disturb him."

**P**RAY, the old one had said. The moon came down full, splintering beams on a tangle of branches overhead. The old Chieftain was covered with the ceremonial cloak of fur and by his side the formal mourner buried her head in her hands, rocked back and forth intoning musically, "Ah, ahhhhha, ah,

ah."

"Old Gods," Neju said, standing in the middle of the villagers, " . . . Old Gods, I do not know how to talk to you the way I should." His voice was small and embarrassed. "I hope you do not mind too much. I'm trying to get it right. Old Gods, legends tell how you controlled mighty demons when you came to our world. Now there have come to our world some demons who control god-men." He wrinkled his brow, trying to state the case as clearly as possible.

"These demons are very bad. They kill our people." He paused a moment. "We want you to help us kill these demons so the god-men will be free and we can live without fear."

Neju waited. The ground did not tremble. The moon did not darken. The Old Gods did not answer.

"Maybe we haven't any right to ask, for ourselves," Neju said. "But for the god-men, who are your brothers from the sky. Help us to free *them*, Old Gods. They want to be free, like all things want to be free."

Still the Old Gods did not answer.

Slowly, from mouth to mouth, a moan passed among the villagers.

"Answer us, Old Gods," Neju pleaded.

The moan grew louder and louder.

"Answer us, Old Gods," Neju repeated. "Please answer us."

And still no answer; only a vagrant breeze in the leaves; no sound,

no voice, no sign that the Old Gods had heard.

And the moan died helplessly.

Neju stood, head bowed until silence came.

"I cannot talk to the Gods," he said. "I am no Chieftain. I am not worthy to talk to Gods."

"We prayed too," a female said. "We all prayed with you. And still they did not answer."

Neju smiled twistedly. "We do not know how to pray. Or the Gods do not know how to listen."

The female said, "They came long ago. Perhaps they have forgotten us."

Silence fell.

Neju looked toward the dead Chieftain. "How can I lead you, unless They make a sign?"

MORNING. A *corlieu* dropped into the clearing to beg for food. A fire sputtered wetly. The mourners came back from the Chieftain's grave (only they knew its location, and the autumn leaves hid the spot).

The hunters slowly came to Neju. They stood awkwardly in a circle around him. Finally one spoke.

"We talked among ourselves, last night, after you went away."

"Yes?" Neju said.

The native shifted on his feet. "You say we must destroy the demons. As you say, we cannot ruh, only to run again and again."

"The Old Gods did not make a sign to me," Neju said wearily.

"The Father said only to pray. He did not say that They would answer."

Neju considered this gravely.

"We must give the god-men heart," the native continued. "They must take courage from us. Together with the god-men, we can defeat the demons. If the Old Gods do not help us, the god-men must."

Neju still listened; only his arms moved, restlessly.

"First we must show the god-men that *we* are not afraid of demons."

Neju waited.

"All of us, children, females, the old, all, must go toward their village, beating drums, crying encouragement. We must show no fear. The god-men will take heart."

Neju stirred.

"They will see that we are not afraid, and they will lose *their* fear. Together we will turn on the evil demons and destroy them. And you must lead us."

"Leave me," Neju said. "I must think about it."

\* \* \*

Neju stood for the hour preceding the heat. The sun moved to a position directly overhead. Then he arose stiffly.

"People!" he called.

The villagers stopped their work. They turned to face him.

"Come to me!" he called.

They came.

"You have heard the plan of the hunters?" he asked when they were quiet.

One by one they nodded their heads.

"And you are not afraid?"

They were silent. Finally, one said, "We are afraid. But we will do what must be done."

" . . . Very well," Neju said. "If it is what you wish, I will lead you."

"We only do what we must," one said.

Neju looked them over carefully. "We will eat, and then we will leave. We will travel to the village of the god-men. Each of you will bring an instrument upon which to make noise to frighten the demons and hearten the god-men."

They nodded, silently, and began to drift away.

Neju named three hunters to remain with him.

"Before we do this," he told them when the others had gone. "we must try once more to slip beyond the wall and slay the demons."

"They will guard each other," a hunter protested. "We cannot overcome them without the help of the god-men."

"We must try," Neju said.

The three hunters looked at each other.

"We will leave the party at the edge of the clearing when the moon is high and try as we did before. And if we fail then they must follow us crying encouragement to the god-men. But we must try first."

The hunters, one by one, said, "We will obey you."

THEY gathered, all of them. And they began to move: a slow, twisting line, hesitating now and again to help the older members. A baby cried and its mother shushed it. The forest was alive with movement and chattering. There was fear and resolve on the natives' faces.

Neju and the three hunters led them. They scouted the territory ahead.

The column rested frequently and the aged clucked to themselves, confused, uncertain. And the others tried to reassure them and make them comfortable. The children ranged, but not far. The tame *corlieu* followed them in the tree tops, chattering down, from time to time, bewildered.

On they moved and the sun fell and the first forest shadows came out to welcome the night. The sunset shower came, unusually heavy, silencing the forest sounds by its patter on the leaves. The air smelled new and crisp.

A group of birds huddled together, chirping sleepily, in a century old *conje* tree.

"We must hurry," Neju said.

And the column moved faster, its sounds of movement being hushed by the damp foliage. Vines and branches parted before it and folded into place after it, swishing softly. The children huddled in, and the column hurried.

When twilight was full upon the forest, and the first bright hero souls were in the sky, Neju slipped

back from the advance of the column to whisper, "We are almost there. Be very still."

Neju gestured that they should spread out, and when their positions suited him, he motioned for them to advance.

And finally they came to the edge of the forest.

There lay the stockade, asparkle with electric lights. The females drew in sharp breaths at the sight of such a magnificent structure — Ah, what the demons build for their servants! they seemed to say. And the helicopter, coming in from a long flight of exploration settled inside the stockade, its blades sparkling in the new moon.

The natives shuddered in superstitious awe; they clutched their noise makers closer to their bodies as if for protection.

NEJU and the three hunters were at the edge of the grasses; the stockade was silent except for the pound of sentry boots.

Neju motioned for the three to remain. He hunched his body and ran to the base of the wall, breaking the almost invisible wire without noticing.

On the wall a red light blinked three times. But Neju did not notice it. Frantically his hands sought holds in the trunks of the wall.

"Here's one of them!" someone cried above. "Over here!"

"They didn't catch us asleep this time!" another voice said.

"I toldja they'd be back!"

There was swearing, and Neju froze, terrified.

Above him, the pounding of many boots.

"What's wrong with this light? . . . Ah, there!"

And the light came on.

It cut a path across the grasses.

A weapon hissed in the direction of a shadow.

"They're out there somewhere!"

"I don't see 'em!"

A weapon hissed again.

"See something?"

"Nah. Thought I did's all."

Neju pressed in against the wall. The light put him in full view but still they did not look down. Neju glanced toward his comrades. As yet those on the wall had not seen them.

"Hey! Look!" a god-man screamed. "There's one!"

Neju looked up.

"Right there!"

And Neju tensed, waiting.

"Well, I'll be damned!"

Neju was looking into two of their faces; the faces were demon controlled, contorted with fear and hate. He saw one of the god-men bring up a weapon. He stared unbelieving into it.

It spurted flame.

In his left side he felt a hot searing arrow of fire. His hands relaxed and he was falling. He fell a long time, through sickness and unreality. Then he was not falling.

In the distance he heard the drum

beats and cries from his people. He wanted to tell them something. He twitched in pain trying to cry out.

"Look!" the god-men cried.

THE natives burst from the forest crying encouragement to the god-men. "Take heart! Turn on the demons! We will free you! Join us!"

"Like sitting ducks!" someone on the wall screamed in elation. "Look at 'em come! Crazy! Chatterin' like monkeys!"

The natives were nearer, shaking their noise makers, screaming.

Someone on the wall smiled and fired and one of the natives stumbled and fell.

"Like sitting ducks!" he screamed.

The other god-men began swiveling their most powerful weapons, focusing the natives in their sights.

And still the natives came, crying that the god-men take heart.

*And then the ground trembled!*

The forest behind the natives began to crackle; trees came apart in all directions flying like matchwood.

A giant being trampled aside all obstructions with invincible power.

Then the metal monster was clear of the forest. It hovered carefully over, around, between the natives.

The stockade light swung, halted.

And a concerted gasp went up from the wall; then curses of terror.

There it stood. A shining colossus. Huge. And serene beyond imagining. It was facing the stockade.

It had traveled far: from the deep, sheltered cave in the far north — where it had rested in silence until, upon its vastly complex and sensitive electronic brain it had received the commands of its owners. After many, many years, as the little child master had thought, they had need of it.

It moved again.

Stockade weapons swiveled; all the hellish energy that they were capable of spewed in its direction.

In its way, it smiled.

Then, very methodically, it began to take the stockade apart, cracking the *conje* trunks like toothpicks.

It noticed one of its masters, Neju, lying wounded by the base of the stockade. It bent and carefully scooped him up. It placed him tenderly in the shoulder pocket, out of harm's way, observing the seriousness of his wound and automatically remembering the proper treatment.

The helicopter took off and headed east.

Absently the toy of a child of the Old Gods swatted the helicopter out of the air, knocking it nearly a quarter of a mile before it crashed into the *conje* trunks of the forest . . .

THE END

**For Back Issues of IMAGINATION See Page 85**

**For A Bonus Subscription to IMAGINATION  
See Page 162**

# WRITING CLASS

By

Robert Sheckley

**"Never use clichés in describing alien life-forms," Professor Carner admonished his class. But Eddie persisted—with good reason!**

EDDIE McDermott paused at the door, then caught his breath and tiptoed into the classroom and to his seat. Mort Ed-dison, his best friend, looked at him reprovingly; the class had been in session for almost fifteen minutes, and one just didn't come late to Professor Carner's lecture. Especially on the first day.

Eddie breathed easier as he saw that Professor Carner's back was to the class as he completed a diagram on the blackboard.

"Now then," Carner said. "Suppose you were writing about the—ah—the Venusian Threngener, which, as you know, has three legs. How would you describe it?"

One of the students raised his hand. "I'd call it a three-legged monstrosity, spawned in the deepest hells of—"

"No," Carner said quietly. "That kind of writing might have been all right in the earliest days of our subject. But remember: You are no

longer dealing with a simple, credulous audience. To achieve the proper effects nowadays, you must *underplay!* Understand? Underplay! Now, someone else?"

Mort raised his hand, threw a glance at Eddie, and said: "How about, 'this tri-pedal blob of orange protoplasm, octopus like in its gropings—'?"

"That's better," Carner said. "Tri-pedal is very nice, very exact. But must you compare it to an octopus?"

"Why not?" Mort asked.

"An octopus," the professor said, "is a well-known form of Earth life. It inspires no terror, no wonder. You might better compare the Threngener to *another* strange monster; a Callistan Eddel-splayer, for example." He smiled winningly at the class.

Eddie frowned and scratched his blonde crewcut. He had liked it better the first way. But Carner should know, of course. He was one of the best-known writers in the en-



tire field, and he had done the college a favor by agreeing to teach the course. Eddie remembered reading some of Carner's stuff. It had scared the living daylights out of him when he was younger. That description of Saturnian brains immobilizing Earth-confederation ships, for example. That had been a great yarn.

THE trouble is, Eddie thought, I'm just not interested. He had had serious doubts about this course. Actually, he had signed up only because Mort had insisted.

"Any questions at this point?" Carner asked. One of the students—a serious-looking fellow wearing black horn-rimmed glasses — raised his hand.

"Suppose," he asked, "suppose you were writing a story speculating on an interstellar combine formed with the purpose of taking over Earth? Would it be permissible, for greater contrast, to make Earth's enemies black-hearted villains?"

A political thinker, Eddie thought with a sneer. He glanced hopefully at the clock.

"It wouldn't be advisable." Carner sat casually on the corner of his desk. "Make them human also; show the reader that these aliens—whether they have one head or five—have emotions understandable to them. Let them feel joy and pain. Show them as being misguided. Pure evil in your characters has gone out of fashion."

"But could I make their leader

pure evil?" the young man asked, busily jotting down everything Carner had said.

"I suppose so," Carner said thoughtfully. "But give him motivations also. By the way, in dealing with that sort of story—the panoramic kind—remember not to oversimplify the aliens' problems. If they amass an army of twenty million, all have to be fed. If the rulers of fifty scattered star systems meet in conclave, remember that different star systems have different languages, and different races have different nervous systems. Bear in mind also, that there would be little logical reason for attacking earth; the galaxy is filled with so many stars and planets, what is the necessity of fighting for one?"

The horn-rimmed fellow nodded dubiously, writing his notes with tremendous speed. Eddie stifled a yawn. He preferred to think of his villains as pure unadulterated evil; it made characterization so much easier. And he was getting tremendously bored.

Carner answered questions for the next half hour. He told them not to describe Venus as a 'jungle-choked green hell,' never, never to call the moon 'pock-marked,' 'small-pox pitted,' or 'scarred from centuries of meteoric bombardment.'

"All this has been said," he explained. "Millions of times. *Do not* use clichés."

He went on to explain that the red spot of Jupiter need not be called a malevolent red eye, that

Saturn's rings don't necessarily resemble a halo, and that the inhabitants of Venus are not Venetians.

"All common errors," he said. "I want a thousand words from each of you next time. I suggest that you choose a planet and write a fresh study of it, avoiding with care all the clichés I mentioned. Class dismissed."

"Well, whadja think?" Mort asked Eddie in the hall. "Isn't he great? I mean, he really *knows*!"

"I'm dropping out of the class," Eddie said, making up his mind.

"What! Why?"

"Well," Eddie said, "There's no reason why I shouldn't call the red spot on Jupiter a malevolent red eye. I put that in a story last month, and it sounded good. And that Venetian Threngener—I think it's a *monstrosity*, and I'm going to write about it that way."

He paused, and his face hardened with conviction.

"But the real reason—well, I'm just not interested in journalism. I'm dropping Carner's course in fact feature-article writing, because I want to write fiction!"

## THE END

# The Editorial

(Continued from Page 5)

the field.

Mention is made of the MWA by the newly formed SFWA. We were a charter member of the Chicago Chapter of MWA, and on its Executive Committee. We saw the MWA draw up a "model" contract which it submitted to the various book publishers in the detective story field. At the time only one publisher adopted the contract; unfortunately that firm dissolved its book division a short time later . . . It can be said that perhaps the writers were too busy arranging a "good deal" for themselves and not in producing stories of commensurate quality.

THE MWA's negotiations with the magazine publishers, we felt,

were equally unfruitful. We saw no word rates being raised—again it's one thing to desire more money, another to deserve it. Indeed, the particular chapter with which we were connected did much to alienate the good will of friendly editors by applying pressure upon a major publishing firm, demanding that the company issue a special MWA edition of a detective story magazine—even though the magazine had already ceased publication. The incident was responsible for a number of resignations in protest, ours included; not to mention the fact that the MWA chapter sported a black-eye in editorial circles for a considerable time.

This action, a product of a false

sense of power, was an extreme case. But the fact that it did happen raises the possibility that some similarly unfortunate situation could occur again.

While we have not followed the activities of MWA since then, and especially the local chapter, we do understand that the cohesive spirit disintegrated until it was little more than a "literary tea."

**W**E submit that the SFWA, without careful planning, could prove similarly ineffective and detrimental to its own cause.

We suggest that its platform exclude any possibility of threats or demands against publishers — individually or collectively. This is the only practical course to follow; certainly the only intelligent one. Publishers can be "threatened" but demands cannot be forced upon them. The resultant harm from the writers' standpoint can be considerable.

**W**E do feel that a writer and/or writers' organization can do much good for all concerned. But we contend that the writer must approach his stated aims — himself. Editors and publishers are not people propounding and putting into effect dictatorial policies. They are friendly and understanding people by and large, more than willing to give any writer a helping hand. Many science fiction writers today receive their start and are subsequently developed into competent craftsmen because conscientious editors take a personal interest in their work. They point out faults and give encouragement even though story after story may have to be rejected. The wise writer takes this coaching at face value and reaps a future profit.

**I**T would seem to us then that the way for any writers' group to attain its goal is through application of internal rather than external efforts. Let the group develop each member's literary potential. Put the responsibility on the writers' shoulders — where it belongs — and then watch the publishers respond. You've got to merit attention before you can command it. The second aim of the SFWA provides an opportunity for such a policy. As a result, the first and third aims will tend to resolve themselves automatically.

**I**N closing this discussion, we hope the SFWA will prove itself to be an organization of conscientious craftsmen. We trust they will construct many fine literary edifices — and not simply stand around discussing an hourly wage rate. Remember, boys, we've got to see the building before we buy it . . .

**N**EXT month we're going to present an unusually fine group of novelettes rather than one long feature story and supporting shorts. The lead story oddly enough, is by a newcomer to the field, Robert Donald Locke. His DEEPFREEZE is the kind of "natural" you recognize as soon as you start reading it. We were so impressed that we had McCauley do a cover around it — and it's really an eye-stopper. There'll be a fine novelette by Daniel F. Galouye. (there's a boy who's really coming along!) and others by Milton Lesser and Irving Cox, Jr. There'll be some fine short stories too, and of course, the departments you like so well. We have a hunch it will be a really top issue, so reserve your copy at your newsstand now. Remember, the January issue goes on sale November 11th. See you then . . . . . wjh

# TIME GRABBER

By

*Gordon R. Dickson*

**It seemed to be logical research, switching sixteen Romans from the 1st Century to the 27th—for study . . . But who was going to take their place?**

**F**EB. 16, 2631—Dear Diary: Do I dare do it? It's so frustrating to have to be dependent upon the whims of a physicist like Croton Myers. I'm sure the man is a sadist—to say nothing of being a pompous ass with his scientific double-talk, and selfish to boot. Otherwise, why won't he let me use the time-grapple? All that folderol about disrupting the fabric of time.

He actually patted me on the shoulder today when I swallowed my righteous indignation to the extent of pleading once more with him. "Don't take it so hard, Buggy," he said—imagine — 'Buggy'—to me, Philton J. Bugsomer, B.A., M.A., LL.D., Ph.D., "in about twenty years it'll be out of the experimental stage. Then we'll see if something can't be done for you."

It's intolerable. As if a little handful of people would be missed out of the whole Roman Empire. Well,

if I can't do it with his permission, I will do it without. See if I don't. My reputation as a scholar of socio-matics is at stake.

\* \* \*

*Feb. 18, 65: MEMO TO CAPTAIN OF THE POLICE:* The emperor has expressed a wish for a battle between a handful of gladiators and an equal number of Christians. Have gladiators but am fresh out of Christians. Can you help me out?

(signed) Lictus,

CAPTAIN OF THE ARENA

*Feb. 19, 65: MEMO TO CAPTAIN OF THE ARENA:* I think I might be able to lay my hands on a few Christians for you—possibly. And then again I might not. By the way, that's a nice little villa you have out in the Falernian Hills.

(signed) Papirius,



## CAPTAIN OF POLICE

*Feb. 19, 65: Papirius:*

All right, you robber. The villa's yours. But hurry! We've only got a few days left.

L.

*Feb. 21, 65: Dear L:*

Thanks for the villa. The papers just arrived. By an odd coincidence I had overlooked the fact that we already had sixteen fine, healthy Christians on hand, here. I am sending them on to you.

Love and kisses,  
P.

\* \* \*

*Feb. 22, 2631: Dear Diary: Congratulate me! I knew my chance would come. Late last night I sneaked into the physics building. That fool of a Myers hadn't even had the sense to lock the door of his laboratory. I opened it and went in, pulled down the shade, turned on the light, and was able to work in complete security. Luckily, I had already played on his credulity to the extent of representing myself as overawed by the mechanical mind, and so induced him to give me a rough idea of how he operated the time-grapple (this over the lunch table in the Faculty Club) so, with a little experimenting, and—I will admit it—some luck, I was able to carry off my plans without a hitch.*

I bagged sixteen young males from

the period of Nero's reign — along somewhere in the last years. By great good luck they happened to be Christians taken prisoner and destined for the Roman Games. Consequently the guards had them all huddled together in a tiny cell. That's why the time-grapple was able to pick up so many at one grab. They came along quite docilely, and I have quartered them in the basement of my house where they seem to be quite comfortable and I can study them at my leisure.

Wait until the Sociomatics department here at the University sees the paper I'll write on this!

\* \* \*

*Feb. 23, 65: MEMO TO CAPTAIN OF POLICE: Where are my Christians? Don't think you can gyp me out of my villa and then not deliver.*

(signed) Lictus,  
CAPTAIN OF ARENA

*Feb. 23, 65: MEMO TO CAPTAIN OF THE ARENA: You got your Christians. I saw them delivered myself. Third cell on the right, beneath the stands.*

(signed) Papirius,  
CAPTAIN OF POLICE

*Feb. 24, 65: MEMO TO CAPTAIN OF POLICE: I tell you they're not there.*

(signed) Lictus,  
CAPTAIN OF THE ARENA

*Feb. 24, 65:* MEMO TO CAPTAIN OF ARENA: And I tell you they are:

(signed) Papirius,

CAPTAIN OF POLICE

P.S. Are you calling me a liar?

*Feb. 25, 65:* MEMO TO CAPTAIN OF POLICE: I tell you THEY'RE NOT THERE. Come on over and look for yourself if you don't believe me.

(signed) Lictus,

CAPTAIN OF THE ARENA

*Feb. 25, 65:* Listen, Lictus:

I don't know what kind of a game you think you're playing, but I haven't time to bother with it right now. Whether you know it or not, the Games load a lot of extra work on the police. I'm up to my ears in details connected with them, and I won't put up with having you on my neck, too. I've got the receipt signed by your jailer, on delivery. Any more noise from your direction and I'll turn it, together with your recent memos, over to the Emperor himself and you can straighten it out with him.

Papirius

\* \* \*

*Feb. 25, 2631:* Dear Diary: What shall I do? How like that sneaky, underhanded physicist to be studying historical force lines in the Roman era, without mentioning it to me. Myers came into lunch today

fairly frothing with what can only be described as childish excitement and alarm. It seems he had discovered a hole in the time fabric in the year 65, although he hasn't so far been able to place its exact time and location (this is, of course, my sixteen Christians) and he tried to frighten us all with lurid talk about a possible time collapse or distortion that might well end the human race—if the hole was not found and plugged. This is, of course, the most utter nonsense. Time collapse, indeed! But I can take no chances on his discovering what actually happened, and so I realized right away that I had to plug the hole.

The idea of putting back my Romans is, of course, unthinkable. They are beginning to respond in a most interesting manner to some spatial relationship tests I have been giving them. Therefore I cleverly sounded out Myers to find the necessary factors to plug the hole. I gather that any sixteen men would do, provided they conformed to the historically important characteristics of the Roman group. This sounded simple when he first said it, but since then the problem has been growing in my mind. For the important characteristics are clearly that they be all Christians who are willing to die for their faith. I might easily find such a group in Roman times but in order to hide the gap my replacements will make I will have to take them from some other era—one Myers is not studying. I have only a

day or two at most. Oh, dear diary, what shall I do?

## PHYSICIST GIVEN KNOCKOUT DROPS

(*University News*)

(Feb. 27, 2631). When Croton Myers, outstanding physicist and professor of Physical Sciences at the university here showed a marked tendency to snore during his after-lunch classes, his students became alarmed and carried him over to the University Hospital. There, doctors discovered that the good professor had somehow been doped. There were no ill effects, however, and Dr. Myers was awake and on his feet some eighteen hours later. Authorities are investigating.

*Feb. 29, 2631: Dear Diary: SUCCESS! Everything has been taken care of. I am so relieved.*

\* \* \*

*Feb. 28, 1649 (From the Journal of John Stowe)*—Today, by the will of the Lord, we are safely on our way from Appleby, fifteen men under the valiant leadership of Sergeant Flail-of-the-Lord Smith, having by our very presence in Appleby served to strike fear into the hearts of the papist plotters there, so that they dispersed—all of the troop in good health and spirits save only for one small trouble, of which I will relate.

It hath come to pass, that, being on our way from Appleby to Car-

lisle, there to join the forces of Captain Houghton, if God shall suffer such to come to pass, we have found ourselves at nightfall in a desolate section of the country, wasted by the late harrying and pillaging. We decided to pitch camp where we found ourselves rather than adventure farther in the dark.

Therefore, we made ourselves comfortable with such simple fare as contents a servant of the Lord, and our provisions supplied, and having sung a goodly hymn and given ourselves over to an hour or so of prayer for the pleasing of our souls, some among us fell to talking of the nature of the surrounding waste, recalling that from heathen times it hath had the name of being a place of most evil and supernatural resort. But our good Sergeant Flail-of-the-Lord, speaking up cheerily, rebuked those who talked so, saying "Are we not all servants of the Lord, and strong in his wrath? Therefore, gird ye up your courage and take heart."

But there were still some among us—and I do confess some sort of the same weakness in myself—who found the blackness and desolation press still heavily upon our souls, reminding us of manifold sins and wickedness whereby we had placed ourselves in danger of the Pit and the ever-present attacks of the Enemy. And our good Sergeant, seeing this, and perceiving we needed the sweet comfort and assuagement of the Word of the Lord, he bade us



sit close by him, and opening his Book which was the Word of the Lord, read to us from II Kings Chapter 9, concerning the overthrow and just fate of Jezebel, whereat we were all greatly cheered and entertained him that he read more to us.

But it happened at this time that a small trouble was thrust upon us, inasmuch as it appeared to all of us that the wide and empty fields of night which surrounded us were whisked away and the appearance of a cell, stone on three sides, and a thick iron grating on the fourth, surrounded us. Whereat we were at first somewhat surprised. However, our good Sergeant, looking up from his Book, bade us mind it not, for that it was no more than a manifestation of whatever unholy spirits plagued the spot and which they had called up in jealous defiance of the sweet virtue of the Lord's word, as he had been reading it.

On hearing this, all were reassured, and, the hour being late, lay down to rest, inasmuch as we are to march at the first break of dawn. So, now, as I write these words, by God's mercy, nearly all are disposed to slumber, saving that the enchantment of the cell doth make somewhat for cramped quarters and I do confess that I, myself am somewhat ill-at-ease, being accustomed to the good pressure of my stout sword against my side as I go to sleep. This, however, may not be helped, for, since it is the custom of our troop to lay aside all sharp tools on

coming into the presence of the Lord our weapons are hidden from us by the enchantment and it would be a mark of lack of faith to pretend to search for them.

And, so, thanks be to the Lord, I will close this entry in my journal and dispose myself for a night of rest.

\* \* \*

*March 1, 65: MEMO TO CAPTAIN OF POLICE:* I notice you finally got cold feet and got those Christians over here after all. But I warn you, I'm not yet altogether satisfied. They look like pretty odd-appearing Christians to me. More like barbarians. And if you've rung in something like that on me, I warn you, the Emperor will hear of it. My gladiators are too valuable to risk with a group of Goths or Vandals.

(signed) Lictus,

CAPTAIN OF THE ARENĀ

*March 1, 65: MEMO TO CAPTAIN OF ARENA:* Papirius has unfortunately been called out of the city on police business, and it is uncertain when he will be able to get back. I am sure, however, that if the Captain said that these men were Christians, they are Christians. However, if you're doubtful, there's nothing easier than to test the matter. Give any of them a pinch of incense and see if they'll sacrifice to the gods to gain their freedom. If they won't they're Christians. You

know how these things work.

(Signed) Tivernius,  
Acting CAPTAIN OF POLICE

\* \* \*

(From the Journal of John Stowe)  
March 2, 1649: Lo! Satan is upon us and his devils do surround us. Trusting in the Lord, however, we have no fear of them.

Early this morning we awoke to find the enchantment still strong about us. Whereupon we took counsel together concerning our conduct in this strait. After several hours of discussion, it was decided that we could not necessarily be considered remiss in our military duties for not pushing on to Carlisle when bound and held by devils. This settled, it remained only to decide on our course of conduct towards these imps of Satan, and Sergeant Flail-of-the-Lord hath determined this by ordering that all present be industrious in prayer and considering of the good works of the Lord.

So it fell out that about the third or fourth hour after sunrise when we were engaged in singing that hymn of sweet comfort—

*Lo! We shall crush His enemies*

*And drown them in their blood—* that a fat, balding devil of middle age, somewhat wrapped and entwined in a sheet of bed linen approached the outer grating of our cell and did speak with us.

At first we were slow in understanding; but as it did happen that

by good chance I had had some teaching in my youth in papist ways, it was not long before I realized that this devil was speaking a particularly barbarous and unnatural form of latin; and, on my conveying this information to Sergeant Flail-of-the-Lord, it was decided that I should speak with the devil for all of us.

I began by abjuring him to turn from the ways of the devil and cast himself upon the mercy of the Lord. But, so imperfect were the creature's wits and so inadequate his grasp of the tongue in which we conversed that he failed to grasp my meaning. Whereupon, I demanded of him by what right he held us and he did name several devils with Romish names and, producing several objects of strange manufacture, seemed to call on us for some kind of action.

At this point, Sergeant Flail-of-the-Lord interrupted to order me that I draw the devil out in conversation and learn whatsoever I could, that the knowledge might be a means to breaking the enchantment. Therefore, I did show interest and beseeched the devil to further explain himself.

Whereupon he did so. And it was apparent immediately that our wise Sergeant, praise the Lord, had correctly judged the state in which we were held. For after a great deal of words which I had some trouble interpreting, it became apparent that this spawn of the Devil, this creature of Satan was endeavoring by means of foul enticements and false

promises of release from our enchantment, to cozen us into bowing down to graven images.

No sooner had I understood this, than I was filled with the wrath of the Lord, and, feeling His hand upon me, spoke words of fire to the lost being before me. I observed that he quailed, although odd as it seems, some of our troop claim to have noticed a slight trace of satisfaction upon his hellish visage. Whereupon he closed the interview with a question.

"Are you all Christians?" he demanded of me.

I answered, "Yes," and, rubbing his hands together with an expression of glee he hurried off.

I related all this to my comrades and the Sergeant. The Sergeant then advised us that we continue as we had before, saying that no doubt we were not alone at the mercy of the Devil, but that were being somewhat tested by the Lord, and as long as our faith in Him remained steadfast, no harm could surely come from this.

So hath the day past, very decently in praying and godly conversation. From scraps of conversation I have overheard from neighboring cells it becometh apparent that tomorrow we are to be thrown into the 'Arena,' which I take to be a devilish word for the pit. So be it. We abide the issue, all of us, with firm faith and quiet hearts. Amen.

\* \* \*

*March 2, 2631:* Dear Diary: What a vexatious group! What on earth shall I do? These Romans seem to be pining away and losing interest in my tests, taking them lackadaisically, if at all. I'm sure I don't know what's wrong. I've given them the most attractive apparatus I can find, different colored little balls and pegs and objects, and brightly-lit shadow cards to study. I've piped all sorts of cheerful music into the basement and given them authentic Roman diets of the period and all they wanted to eat. They just don't seem to have any interest. I can't imagine what's wrong.

*(From the notebook of Croton Myers) March 2, 2631:*

11:02 P.M.:—Dial settings A-26.24, B-5.1, C-2.73779 Calibration check, Vernier check. (Run 73)

Found it. Year 65, our calendar, Feb. 22, 10:15 P.M. (approx). Sixteen individuals. Time scar to present date and year. Hole plugged on or about Feb. 27. Structure therefore safe middle late Roman era, disregarding minor time-thread damage which runs out anyway. However—took general check on hunch, and hunch confirmed. There's another hole even closer to our time. I can tell by the strains on the major time-threads. No time to trace it down now. We've got about five hours worth of elasticity in the present time-fabric before there'll be (a) a time collapse, or (b) an attempt by the fabric to rearrange itself to

relieve the strain. Even the rearrangement could do for us. This second hole's too close to our own period.

I'm no Sherlock, but to me it adds up to only one answer—Bugsomer. I'm going over and see if I can force the information out of him.

*The damn fool!*

\* \* \*

*March 3, 65: TO THE CAPTAIN OF THE ARENA:* Order your glad-iators to stretch out this battle with the Christians. I don't want a sheep-slaughter. I want some sport. Some running around and excitement. See to it.

NERO, Imp.

*March 3, 65: TO THE EMPEROR:* Hail Caesar! I will do whatever I can when the time comes. But you know how uncooperative these Christians are. They won't even pick up their swords and armor. They want to be martyrs. However, I promise that the Emperor will not be disappointed.

(signed) Lictus,  
CAPTAIN OF THE ARENA

\* \* \*

*Dear Diary:* I have no idea what the date is, so I just won't put any down. If the world goes topsy-turvy, it's not *my* fault. I'm all in a flutter. I hardly know where to begin writing.

I guess it all began when that pig-

headed Myers came breaking into my house in the middle of the night. Breaking in, literally! My front door was locked, naturally, so he just kicked in a window and walked through it. I was down in the basement with my poor Romans, who hadn't been sleeping too well lately. I was trying to get them to take some barbiturates, but they seemed afraid to do so for some reason. They preferred to turn and toss on their cushions all night. \*

Well, at any rate I heard a noise. And then the next thing I heard was his bull voice calling, "Bugsy! Bugsy!" Before I could head him off he was at the top of the steps and clumping down. My poor Romans just stared at him.

"So here you are," he said triumphantly.

"Is that odd?" I replied. "After all, it's my house. And, while we're on the matter, I'd like to know how you got in, and by what right —"

"Oh, shut up," he said and pointed at my Romans. "Are these the sixteen you stole first?"

"I don't know what you're talking about," I answered coldly. "These are some foreign students from one of my classes. We're holding a seminar in Roman customs."

He just snorted, and, ignoring me entirely, turned to the nearest Roman and started jabbering at him in barbarous high-school Latin. I even had trouble following him, but my Roman didn't. His face lit up and before I could say a word he

was telling Myers all about what had happened to them, and the tests I'd been giving them. And right then and there, I learned something about Roman ingratitude. Can you believe it? Those sixteen young fellows weren't the least bit thankful for being saved from death in the Arena. All that concerned them was the fact that they were homesick. Homesick! For lions and gladiators!

I interrupted and asked my Roman whether he hadn't been well treated. And he turned on me and said—almost in those very words—that he had—he'd been too well treated. He'd been a hardworking artisan and Christian all his life and it didn't come natural to him to loll around on cushions and play with children's toys. He ended up by saying that if I gave him another test he'd ram it down my throat.

Well, after something like that, I was only too glad to get rid of them. I told Myers so and we started up the stairs. Just at that moment there was the most curious shiver—decidedly unpleasant—and we all suddenly found ourselves back at the foot of the stairs again. Myers turned white as a sheet.

He gasped. "Good God, I didn't think it would start this quickly!"—And I don't mind telling *you*, dear Diary, that for a second even I felt a touch of fear.

We hurried, all eighteen of us, across the darkened campus and up to his laboratory. Twice more those

curious shivers threw us back a step or two in time, and we had to do things over.

"It's cracking faster," said Myers, and herded my Romans into an area marked off by chalk lines on the floor. Myers took me by the arm.

"Listen," he said, "and listen good, because I don't have time to say it twice. I've got the sixteen Romans waiting in a trigger area. There's a trip mechanism that will throw them back to their own time the minute there's an opening for them to fit into. I'm going to stay here and operate the machine. I want you to ride the time-grapple back to the Arena and see that the others—you said they were Roundheads?—and nobody but they get into the time-grapple for transference back to their own time."

"Me?" I said. "Into the time-grapple. I certainly will not—" Before I could finish he seized me by the shoulders and pushed me into the time-grapple area.

The moment I stumbled across the line the laboratory faded around me. I felt a moment of nausea, and then I was swinging, unsupported and apparently invisible above the royal box in the arena. When I leaned down I was right on a level with Nero himself. I took one horrified look at him, gasped, and turned away.

I looked down in the arena, and saw immediately why Myers had sent me back. The time-grapple would, of course, have to get the

Roundheads all on one grab and it would be impossible until they were all close together. I knew that, back in the laboratory, Myers could see me apparently standing on the floor in front of him and his devilish machine. He could also, of course, see Nero and part of the Royal box. I would have to direct him to the Roundheads when the time came.

I looked out in the arena, and groaned. The door to the cells was just opening and the Roundheads were filing out onto the field. The gladiators were already out; the Roundheads were too far dispersed for the time-grapple to grab them.

"Get together, get together!" I cried—but of course they couldn't hear me as long as I was in the time-grapple field.

Just then Nero spoke up next to my ear, and I *could* hear him, because of the auditory equipment built into the field.

"My dear," he was saying petulantly to a thickly powdered, fat-faced woman beside him. "Look at those Christians! And Lictus promised me that I shouldn't be disappointed. Look how sober and dull they are. They usually come on with their faces lit up, almost exalted."

"Perhaps," said the woman, "this group doesn't feel so much like being martyred. Maybe they'll run around a bit more."

I could stand no more of this, and signaled Myers to move the field down toward the Roundheads. The idiots were still too far apart to be

picked up and were talking together in that odd, seventeenth century English.

"What think you, Sergeant," said one fresh-faced youngster, "are we to be put to trial by those armored demons, yonder?"

"It may be, John," replied the individual addressed as Sergeant.

The young man sighed. "I feel the hand of the Lord strong upon me," he said. "None the less, had I but my claymore —"

"Fie, John Stowe," reproved the Sergeant. "Let not your mind dwell upon earthly matters. Look rather upon yon armed demons, with a mind to marking their *true* natures. See yon demon with the chased shield, which is surely Pride. And the other beside him, whom, by his lean and envious face I clearly read as Covetousness."

And the Sergeant went on giving names to the various gladiators, so that the other Roundheads became interested and drifted over. I was beginning to have hopes of snatching them up immediately when the Sergeant wound up his little discussion.

"And besides, John Stowe," he said. "If the Lord wisheth us to have weapons, He surely will provide them."

AT this moment, an attendant of the Arena leaned over the stone parapet that encircled the field and dropped a bundle of swords and armor.

"What did I tell you?" said the Sergeant.

So they dispersed in the process of putting on the armor, and the chance was lost.

"What's holding things up?" boomed the voice of Myers in my ear.

"The battle," I snapped. "They're supposed to fight those gladiators."

"What!" yelled Myers. "Stop them. Don't let them do it. They've all got to get back alive."

"What can I do?" I asked bitterly. "It's up to the Roundheads."

And, indeed it was. There is no way of knowing how many lives were depending upon those Roundheads at that moment.

At any rate, there was a toot on a horn, or some kind of signal like that, and off they went.

"Do you take Pride, Stowe," said the Sergeant. "And so each of the rest of you pick out a cardinal sin. I, myself will take Covetousness." He lifted his Roman short sword over his head and shouted like a wild man.

"Now, LET GOD ARISE!" he shouted, and the Roundheads charged toward the enemy.

"I'm moving you back to Nero," said Myers' voice in my ear. "Maybe we can put pressure on him somehow."

I was swooped back to the royal box. But by the time I got there the situation was such that neither of us could think of anything to do. Nero was bouncing around like a

fat toad, squeaking at the top of his lungs.

"Why — what — what —" he was squealing. "What are they doing? You Christians, stop it! Stop chasing my gladiators, do you hear me? Stop it! Stop it!"

Somebody blew that silly horn again, and the gladiators stopped, but the Roundheads went right on.

"Guard, thyself, Pride!" the stentorian voice of John Stowe floated up to us in the Royal box. Beside Stowe there was a clang and a thud as the Sergeant decapitated Covetousness.

Gladiators were getting cut to pieces right and left. But not for long. Nero was ordering his own guard out of the stands, down into the Arena.

"I've got an idea," I called to Myers. "Drop me on the field."

"It better be good," he grunted. "Or you'll go the same way they're going!"

He dropped me. I came into sight of those Romans suddenly, and the shock of my appearance temporarily halted the Praetorian Guard. They looked from me to Nero and back again.

"To me!" I yelled, running over the field, waving my arms. "To me, Roundheads!"

Well, they looked up at the sound of my English voice and, to make a long story short, gathered around in short enough space for Myers to pick them up. The field faded around us . . .

*March 3, 65: TO THE CAPTAIN OF THE ARENA:* I thought I ordered you to produce Christians for slaughter! What devilish magic have you loosed upon Rome under the guise of Christians? I order you to capture those sixteen hell-spawned devils who murdered our gladiators. At once!

NERO, Imp.

*March 3, 65: TO THE EMPEROR:* My Caesar! I know not how the sixteen Christians escaped from the arena — replacing themselves with sixteen others. I have contacted Papirius, Captain of Police, and he informs me it must be a plot on the part of the Christians for an uprising throughout the City. I believe the missing sixteen are in hiding. My Guard will be ordered out at once to apprehend them.

(signed) Lictus,

CAPTAIN OF THE ARENA

*March 3, 65: TO CAPTAIN OF POLICE:* I have at hand information from Lictus, Captain of the Arena, concerning the plot of the Christians to overthrow Roman rule with today's events in the Arena as a signal for insurrection. Drastic action must be taken. Burn out every festhole in Rome where the Christians are massed. At once!

NERO, Imp.

*March 3, 65: TO THE EMPEROR:* Hail, Caesar! Your command has been obeyed. Even now the Chris-

tians burn in their catacombs!

(signed) Papirius,

CAPTAIN OF POLICE

*March 3, 65: TO THE CAPTAIN OF POLICE:* Are you mad, you fool? By whose authority have you put the torch to Rome? The flames are spreading throughout the city—underground—and already are at the arena dungeons! Send help to quench the fires!

Lictus,

CAPTAIN OF THE ARENA

*March 3, 65: TO THE CAPTAIN OF THE ARENA:* Don't call me a fool, you idiot! How was I to know the fire would spread through the catacombs! I can't send you any men. I'm appealing to the Emperor for help myself. The fires are getting beyond control!

Papirius,

CAPTAIN OF POLICE

*March 3, 65: TO THE EMPEROR:* Mighty Caesar! The Christians have turned the fires against us and our city is in danger of being consumed. What shall we do?

(signed) Papirius,

CAPTAIN OF POLICE

*March 3, 65: TO THE CAPTAIN OF POLICE:* You imbecile! I order you to burn out the Christians and you set fire to the entire city! Already my palace is on fire! Consider yourself under arrest! Report to me after you have the flames under con-



trol. Or perhaps you'd prefer throwing yourself into the closest inferno and cheat me of the pleasure of roasting you alive later!

NERO, Imp.

*March 3, 65: TO THE EMPEROR:* The city is engulfed, my Caesar! I shall die fighting the flames. But what of you, my Emperor? I shall pray to the Gods that you be spared my fate.

(signed) Papirius,

CAPTAIN OF POLICE

*March 3, 65: TO THE EX-CAPTAIN OF POLICE:* The Gods be damned—I'm getting the hell out of Rome!

NERO, Imp.

\* \* \*

*April 1, 2631:* Dear Diary: Myers has seen to it for my transfer. Oh, he's clever and all that to keep the fact hidden that I used the time-grapple. But I can't see what all the fuss is about. We corrected the time stress before anything critical could happen. The way he carries on you'd think we did something (I, that is) that would go down in history. A ridiculous thought, but then Myers is a physicist and you know what suspicious natures they have. . . . I often wonder though how the games did turn out that afternoon . . .

THE END

## ★ "Fan" of the Future ★

THERE is nothing new under the sun! There are only new ways of looking at old things. And the last place on Earth that you'd expect to see a clever new development would be in the electric fan category. Ever since, sixty or seventy years ago, somebody stuck a propeller on the shaft of an electric motor, electric fans have been basically unchanged in spite of all the advertising ballyhoo.

There is an inventor named (improbably!) "Schlumbohm" who has a habit of looking at old things in new ways and coming up with the most ingenious inventions imaginable. He's responsible for the future's fan.

Knowing that air has friction, and remembering that there is a type

of vacuum pump invented by Gaede which relies on a whirling cylinder to remove air by friction with its surface, this scientist-inventor built the new fan. He simply took several paper discs, spaced them with wooden spacers, mounted them on the shaft of an electric motor—and presto—he had the fan which eventually we're going to see everywhere!

This ingenious fan just whirls air outwards by counter centrifugal force like spraying water from a grinding wheel. One neat feature is that the air is automatically filtered through the paper discs. True this is no Earth-shaking invention, but then progress consists of little steps which added together, make up the big ones.

# The LEVITANT

*By*

*Daniel F. Galouye*

**Nature had given Jarvis Huldorn a strange gift—the hump on his back. Was it this that set him apart from other men—or his ability to fly!**

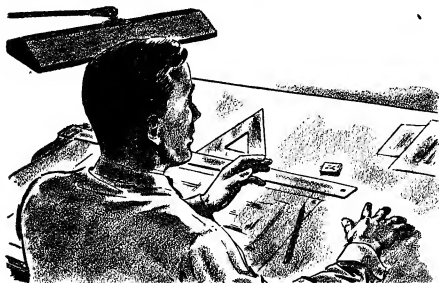
**T**HE gaunt individual ran a lean hand through his tousled gray hair and paused his pacing to look directly into my eyes.

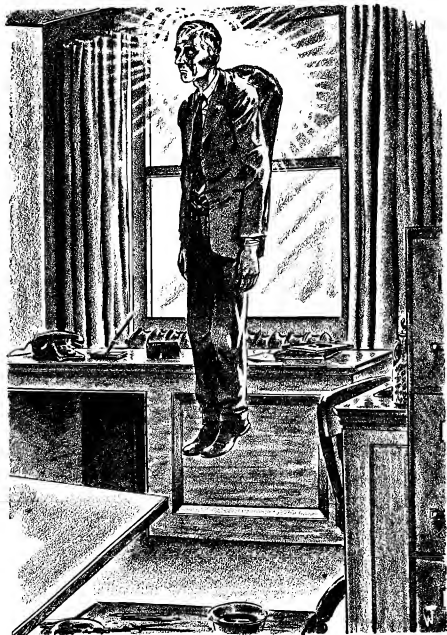
I glanced slowly past the upturned edge of my drafting board and squirmed uneasily in my seat, trying to meet his stare.

The eyes were not "cold and beady," as they had been described

in numerous newspaper reports. The face did not "bear a cynical sneer." Nor was the chin "jutting forward menacingly."

No megalomaniac — this Jarvis Huldorn—this pale, trembling individual. He had entered my office only five minutes ago and had announced himself without fear of betraying his whereabouts to author-





ities who had sought him since his last disappearance five years before.

"I am going to disappear again—forever," he said suddenly.

He had the floor. He was doing the talking. I was just listening. I wondered, however, why he trusted remaining in my presence—why he didn't ask me not to betray him to the police.

"But, before I disappear," he grasped the edges of my drafting board with bony fingers, "I want to feel that I have convinced at least one person . . . As lofty as my aims were in the beginning, the only objective I have now is to make one person believe."

Huldorn—the fabulous Huldorn—was asking only me to believe now. He had asked that a whole world believe. But that was years ago—before his physical dissimilarity to humanity had transformed him into a hunted recluse. The years had passed, and now he was here, asking faith of only one person—*me*. Why? I asked myself. *Why?*

HE turned to resume his restless pacing. And the infamous as the newspapers had once called it) hump on his back loomed prominently through the thin, ragged linen coat. The hump shifted from side to side loosely as he walked. The bulbous protuberance mockingly suggested the answer to the question why Huldorn was speaking with me. But it was an answer that I did not allow to form fully in my mind—an answer I did

not want to hear.

"The hump on my back fascinates you?" The smile may have been a sardonic one, but it did not seem so.

"I'm not a hunchback, you know," he said in an indifferent air that echoed the probable thousands of times he had similarly explained the deformity. "That's the organ." He reached over his shoulder and touched the swollen area gingerly.

The *organ* . . . That was the term Huldorn had used in attempting to explain the phenomenon to scientists, researchists and even police.

His presence in my office opened musty pages of newsprint in my mind—pages filled with accounts of the unbelievable Jarvis Huldorn that I had read in my childhood. The reports then were on the sensational and mystical abilities of the—what was it they had called him?—The Levitant. Then, in my early teens, there were other accounts—stories that cited eminent men in an explanation of Huldorn's abilities. Those explanations dealt with mass hypnotism. There were also the accusations of exhibitionism—hints of mental unbalance.

Later, as I reached manhood, came the adverse accounts in the legendary figure's life—accounts of murder, escape, arrest, hearings, prosecution, incarceration, escape, disappearance. All these were parcels of the life history of the fantastic figure before me now.

The world had stood shakily on the brink of a decision only a

scant handful of years ago—was Huldorn man, or was he something more than man? Or was he sub-human, a mentally deranged individual with nothing more than a mystical power?

I looked up at this man—this uncategorized force whose very name had once even been confetti on the lips of the peoples of an entire world.

“IT’S the organ, Paul Moore,” Huldorn drew my full attention back to him, using my name for the first time. “And it works—no matter what your distinguished doctors and physicists tell you . . . It works. And it isn’t hypnosis that makes you *think* it works.”

Huldorn backed slowly from my drafting board. He sidled to an area in the center of the cluttered office and stood between two desks, in full view of my eyes. Then he let his hands hang limp by his sides and closed his eyelids.

His entire figure seemed to be transformed by a quality of apparent inflexibility that clothed his flesh and garments with marble-like rigidity.

I gasped as a pure white gossamer enveloped his exposed skin. Then, suddenly his feet were no longer on the floor. There was a two-inch distance between them and the hardwood surface. He continued to rise in the air as I felt perspiration form on my forehead. I dabbed at the droplets with a handkerchief and closed my eyes in sub-

missive despondency.

Then it was true! This man was no fake. I had not been hypnotized by him into imagining what I had witnessed. He actually could do what he had claimed he could all along. Levitation was one of his abilities—levitation and the strange metamorphosis his body underwent while he was levitating.

This man had been persecuted—unjustly accused of wrong-doing. Forced to perpetrate crime to protect himself as a hatefully vengeful humanity basked in the experience of seeing him degraded. He had been persecuted all along. And an entire world had reveled because the process was eliminating something alien—perhaps something better than they, but nevertheless something strange.

HULDORN’S body returned to normal and he crossed to my desk.

“Mind if I sit down?” he asked, drawing the chair from the adjoining draft board. It was Saturday and there was no one else in the office—in the entire building—except myself and the girl at the switchboard in the outer office. I offered him a cigarette. He took it gratefully.

“It’s been hard, Paul,” he shook his head, blowing out a draft of smoke reflectively. “It’s been hard—ever since the beginning.

“I can remember the first time I did what I just showed you. It seems like yesterday . . . You see,

this hump wasn't on my back all the time. I lived quite a normal life until I was thirty. Then, in a matter of several days, it appeared.

"I considered having it removed by surgery immediately. But the thing was producing no ill effect and I had my professorial duties at the university. The semester would be over soon and there would be plenty of time for hospitalization after that.

"But, before the semester ended, I began to acquire a vague insight into the purpose and significance of the hump. It was then that I discovered the minute tentacle-like bit of flesh protruding from the center of the mass.

"My interest in the thing deepened as I found I was beginning to have muscular control over the protruding tentacle. Physiology wasn't too far removed from my field of psychology. And Dr. Berdarnt, the medical department director, was receptive to my suggestion that he help me study the hump in the university's laboratories.

"It wasn't long before we found muscular structures were features of the mass of flesh. X-rays also disclosed an intricate neural connection between the hump and the brain.

"This thing on my back, we discovered, was no chance tumor—no accidental congestion of infected flesh that had to be removed by surgery. Dr. Berdarnt and I were convinced that what was on my back was the result of a mutation."

I was not giving him my undivid-

ed attention. I heard what he was saying, of course, but he was offering an account of only the bare facts. While he spoke, my memory elaborated on the high points of his life history. The recollections came one by one, into my consciousness again.

\* \* \*

IT was an unusually warm spring day when Huldorn, the psychology professor, stood before his class and labored through a lecture on the sympathetic nervous system.

As was his custom, he stood in front of the podium. And, as was also his habit, his shoulders were occupied in their almost imperceptible sidewise motion which served to rub his shoulder blades against the edge of the podium.

In mid-sentence, Huldorn seemed to increase his height by several inches. Where the top of the podium had been on a level with his shoulders, it now seemed to be almost even with his waistline.

The effect was noted immediately by several students. Those in the rear rows, however, paid no attention, assuming Huldorn had stepped upon some object for greater elevation. Even the professor was unaware of what had happened and continued his lecture.

But alert students in the front row had seen Huldorn's feet leaving the floor. They had seen him rise more than a foot and remain suspended without support! And the shrill cry of one coed brought the entire class involuntarily to its feet.

Huldorn dropped his handful of notes. The coed who had screamed fled from the room. She was followed by several other girls and a handful of men. In the partial exodus, Huldorn became aware of his newly gained elevation and glanced at his feet.

Incredulously he surveyed the distance from his shoes to the floor. And then the invisible props which had been holding him in suspension dropped him to the floor.

Astonishment still blanketed his mind as he regained his feet and heard the exclamation of one of the young men in the second row.

"He's hypnotized us!"

The exclamatory explanation was accepted without question by the remainder of the class. Huldorn had often conducted demonstrations of hypnotism on a classwide basis. And the class, groping for the most immediate explanation it could find, laughed off the phenomenon as a mass hypnotic effect. The professor, however, knew different and hastily dismissed the students.

THAT first incident received no publicity except in retrospective accounts of Huldorn's life, I remembered.

And, as I watched Huldorn fidget nervously and lay an arm limply across my drafting board, I wondered whether he would not have been wiser to guard his secret selfishly, and not try to find a way to give it to humanity.

"You see," Huldorn stubbed his

cigarette out in my ash tray, "after that experience, I excused myself temporarily from my duties on the pretense of illness. I needed time to consider what was happening.

"It had been only days before that I noticed the swelling between my shoulder blades. I had intended to consult a physician. But there seemed to be nothing pressing about the condition. The levitation in the classroom, however, was soon followed by similar occurrences."

The accounts which he began relating then were other incidents which had not found their way into the press on a day-to-day basis as they had occurred.

Huldorn told of the periods of levitation that followed the initial one. The second came on the same day, as he undressed for his bath.

He was still reflecting on what had happened before the class as he pulled his undershirt over his head. Huldorn felt the cotton fabric scrape lightly over the protuberance on his back. And, before he realized what was happening, he was in the air again, his bare feet skimming over the surface of the tiled floor!

His head tapped against the ceiling. His arms and legs flailed about aimlessly and he clutched for something by which he could pull himself back to the floor.

He was still grasping at nothing as his feet contacted the tile unexpectedly. Perspiration stood out in beads on his face for more than an hour while he sat trembling on

the side of the tub. Dressing after the belated bath, he made another discovery. As he drew the fresh undershirt over his head and pulled it down around his body, he experienced an additional startling sensation — for a moment he felt as though he were Atlas bearing the world on his shoulders.

His arms dropped to his side and hung like leaden weights and his knees buckled under the overpowering force of a body that seemed to be a dozen times as heavy as it had been but a second before!

As he lay motionless on the floor under the unbearable burden of the imagined weight, he tried to shout. But there was no control over his mouth or voice.

**H**ULDORN shrugged his shoulders, walked around the drafting board and looked out the window at the sparse Saturday morning traffic below.

"I screamed, all right," he told me. "I screamed until my wife ran frantically into the room. Seeing her standing there at the door startled me into silence—but I couldn't explain why I had been screaming . . . How could you tell your wife that you had been floating in the air and had been knocked to the floor by an unseen force?"

Huldorn told no one of the discovery of his incredible powers. His inability to understand the phenomenon became a fear he could not overcome. The next several days after the initial discovery he

spent in the confines of his home, generally remaining out of contact with everyone—even his wife.

The sudden, unexplained behavior of her husband was a matter of concern with her, however. Huldorn remained in bed and spoke with her only when necessary. When the doctor whom she had summoned came, Huldorn allowed only a precursory examination. When the physician insisted on further inspection Huldorn tactfully dismissed the man.

To the physician, Huldorn's actions were evidence of a developing mental disintegration. The physician, years later, testified to that effect at a sanity hearing.

"You see," Huldorn shifted his weight in the chair, being ostensibly considerate of the hump, "it required several days before my blinding amazement gave way to a return of the normal processes of reasoning and allowed me to connect the strange ability of levitation with the condition existing on my back. It happened several times before I realized that whenever the lump was scraped in an upward direction, I rose in the air; whenever something was rubbed across it with the pressure being exerted downward, my weight increased enormously.

"Experimentation bore this out. By stretching my arms over my shoulder, I found I could touch the bump. Whenever I pressed down on it, the gravitational force acting on me was increased, in direct proportion to the pressure applied.



Pressing the center of the thing upward seemed to generate a negative gravity throughout my body!

"This called for a self-examination with the aid of mirrors . . . I was impressed with the deformity's growing size—it was half the diameter of a golf ball. Covered with chitinous, taut skin, it seemed even to possess the hardness of a stone. From the center of the hump protruded an even smaller blob of hard flesh, rather reddish in appearance, but apparently slightly softer than the rest of the mass.

"Again I ran my hand over my shoulder and touched the bump—the small knob in the middle. I pressed upward—and, as expected, I rose upward. I pressed downward, very lightly, and I returned to the floor.

"I tried to rationalize, imagine what special nature of the deformity could dictate the effects gravity would have on my body. In thinking of the matter, I made an additional discovery . . . When I imagined the small blob being pressed upward, I involuntarily rose in the air! When I imagined it pressed downward, I returned to the floor!

"Still standing between the two mirrors, I repeated the experiment and noticed that when I imagined the smaller protuberance being pressed upward, it was distended in that direction!

"I actually had muscular control over the thing! Rising again, I imagined the knob being deflected toward my right shoulder. My

body immediately assumed a motion in that direction."

I LISTENED to Huldorn while he related additional experiments. I listened, at the same time recalling other words of his describing those incidents — statements that had been printed in hundreds of papers and magazines.

The professor remained away from his duties for more than a month. That time he did not spend wholly at home. Frequently he drove into the sparsely populated countryside where he could press his tests further. He did not experiment during daylight. Exercising care against being detected, he usually waited until twilight before he turned his attention to the hump and exhilaratingly basked in the experience of weightless flight.

Results were slow in coming at first. On the initial few occasions that he submitted himself to lengthy periods of levitation—periods of several minutes' duration—he found the exertion required was fatiguing; that the speed with which he progressed through the air was slow; that he was unable to attain an elevation of more than a few hundred feet without becoming tired.

But the fear of the phenomenon had left him. Now, he could thrill to the sensations he felt as he dashed upward, arched in a graceful turn to the right or swooped groundward at breakneck speed, only to halt his descent precipitously before dashing into the earth. He

also found that motion was facilitated when he assumed a horizontal attitude.

And, as the weeks passed, he became more accustomed to and adept at the strange ability. He was able to remain aloft for increasingly prolonged periods—soar higher—turn more abruptly — achieve greater speed.

On one evening, when there was a full moon, he left the ground and set his course straight upward. Huldorn closed his eyes and allowed his entire being to quiver in exaltation at the sensation of strong winds whipping the length of his body as he shot heavenward—*faster, faster!*

His hair hung in straight streamers across his forehead; his speed was so great that the strands were motionless in their wind-held rigidity. But, still he urged himself onward.

It was only when he felt the gigantic force of the wind tearing strips of clothing from his body that he slowed the pace. He fought the wind to bring his arms up from his side to shield his eyes with cupped hands. Eyelids protected, he bent his head slightly and glanced at his clothing . . . The garments were in shreds.

Cutting his speed additionally, he braked to an almost complete stop. There was little wind here—how many miles up, he did not know. But he did know the distance could be measured in miles, for it was chilly and he had difficulty in breathing the rare air. He realized

suddenly that he was actually gasping for the oxygen-starved, rarified atmosphere. The outline of the moon became hazy and the city lights below and to his left seemed to flicker. Then there were bluish-black dots dancing before his eyes. Fearing suffocation, he swooped down as fast as he had ascended.

“MY physical appearance when I arrived home that night,” Huldorn accepted another cigarette from me and lighted it, “would have been difficult to account for. There was no one there, however, to whom I might explain it . . . My wife had left me. A hastily penned note accused me of impossible actions. She said she feared for my sanity. But, through my queer actions, I had practically invited her to leave, I realized.

“In those first few weeks there was much to be done—I had to investigate the scope of my mystic powers. I had to learn from whence they came; why they were bestowed on me; to what purpose it was intended I should put them.”

A month after the incredible discovery, my memory reminded me, Huldorn had returned to his duties. He had decided he should be studied thoroughly by physicians and scientists with a view toward learning the principles under which levitation was possible. It was even not too irrational to hope that perhaps those principles could be duplicated in other individuals—that humanity in general might benefit.

The decision to present himself to the proper specialists for study was coupled with one other factor—the increasing size of the hump, which was beginning to be noticeable. One of the persons who had commented on the professor's appearance was Berdarnt, a close friend. Huldorn confided in the doctor. The physician's later account of the matter also received prominent play in the press.

"Yes," Berdarnt had told the professor after Huldorn had removed his shirt and undershirt, "it definitely has the appearance of a tumorous growth—possibly cystic, although not outwardly apparent."

"It's not tumorous, Dr. Berdarnt," Huldorn shook his head. "It's definitely a functional organ."

The doctor laughed. "And what makes you think that misplaced mass of protoplasm has an intended function?"

"Watch the darkened knob in the center, doctor—watch it closely, and you'll see what I mean."

Berdarnt replaced his glasses and walked to Huldorn's rear. He bent over and peered closely at the mass of flesh and its central protuberance.

Huldorn was two feet off the floor and still rising before he heard Berdarnt gasp and drop stunned into a chair. Still in the air, the professor turned slowly and faced the physician. Berdarnt was limp, his mouth agape.

"There wasn't much difficulty in

explaining to Berdarnt what had happened, Paul," Huldorn leaned forward. "Of course he found the entire matter incredible at first. But, with the proof before his eyes and in his office, he had no choice but to believe.

"Then, that same night, there was the exhaustive examination. Berdarnt handled me and the hump with caution. Most of the night he devoted to exposing X-ray plates and developing them . . ."

AS Huldorn continued to speak I recalled the newspaper reproductions of those plates. They had been printed on scores of occasions. The outlines interpreted what was seen on the plates as indicating a complex muscular structure in the mass; a disproportionately enlarged spinal cord; a superabundance of neural tissue throughout the body; a short, stubby neural branch from the cord to the area of the dorsal configuration.

Berdarnt had been the first to agree with Huldorn that the deformity on his back was not pathologic—but, rather, occupied a class along with other organs purposely allotted by nature to the human body.

The physician was more enthusiastic than Huldorn over the discovery. It was Berdarnt who first advanced the theory that Huldorn was a mutant. One of his quotes that had appeared in the papers and was still in my scrapbook particularly impressed me:

*"The proposition that a species*

can change its form radically through mutation seemed proved. Whether Huldorn's organ is a true mutation, however, may never be established in our lifetime, for the mutant characteristics we have studied thus far are recessive and, in subsequent breeding with normal stock, are weeded out in such a manner that the mutation does not occur in the offspring. This particular mutation, however, with its complexity of structure, may remain a dormant parcel of the strain of humanity which will follow reproductively behind Professor Huldorn. When his descendants are spread sufficiently far apart genealogically, the possibility exists that chance inbreeding will occur. It is then that we might expect the recessive trait to become dominant—and perhaps other Huldorns may be born into the race in increasing numbers.

*"This situation gives us cause to stop and consider what unsuspected senses, sensory organs, perceptors, organs of communication and motion, are yet to become part of the human species along the track of evolution that lies ahead of us . . . What supermen will evolve? With what type of advanced beings will evolution populate this Earth? It is not hard to imagine the time when the life form that was precedent to man and mammal did not possess such an organ as the eye. Perhaps photosensitive cells evolved spontaneously; perhaps such a cell*

*was a gift to only one individual member of the precedent species. What a marvelous advance that was—to be given the power of sight, where before, such a power did not exist . . .*

*"What a marvelous advance in evolution we may be experiencing now—to witness an individual being given the power of free flight, a power which may subsequently be inbred into the entire race within a scant few score generations!"*

BERDARNT'S lofty estimate of the situation, however, was soon to be pin-pricked. The physician's series of examinations of Huldorn stretched over a week. At the end of that time he prepared his paper for the medical journal and began making arrangements for the first introduction of Huldorn to an assembly of eminent educators and scientists.

The presentation was timed to be held on the night before publication of the doctor's article. The professor's introduction was not to be public; it was to be restricted to a few select members of the medical and allied fields.

Huldorn recounted the incident with a tinge of bitterness in his voice.

"The chemistry auditorium's audience was tense that night," he recounted. "Dr. Berdarnt's invitations had announced the introduction of what he considered one of the most important scientific

discoveries of the age.

"I can still see the expectant, leering faces as Berdarnt stood proudly on the stage and addressed the gathering of more than a hundred persons. He and I were the only ones on the stage. Berdarnt spoke with a ringing voice whose very enthusiasm commanded the audience. They listened attentively to his discourse and theories on mutations. Some of those who wore beards stroked them pensively. Others leaned forward in their seats. Their ears were given to Berdarnt, but their eyes were fastened on me.

"Berdarnt finally finished his discussion with these words:

"'Now, gentlemen, before I continue with the varied hypotheses I have been touching upon, I want to introduce Professor Jarvis Huldorn who will demonstrate the mutant characteristic, by first baring his body from the waist up.'

"I felt somewhat embarrassed as I disrobed and turned my back to the audience. The disfiguration was clearly visible to those who occupied seats near the front. Others crowded forward for a better look, but Dr. Berdarnt restrained them, explaining there would be sufficient time for examination later.

"The audience gasped with amazement as my feet left the floor and I drifted higher toward the ceiling, leveled myself horizontally and floated slowly over their heads in a broad semicircle that brought me back to the stage.

"Everyone had a look of shocked incredulity. Then came the explanation. Berdarnt outlined in detail the results of his study of me. He passed out reproductions of the X-ray plates. And he produced charts that traced in various colors the muscular and neural structures attendant to the deformity, the arterial arrangement within the organ. There were personal examinations by physicians in the assembly, casual inspections by other eminent men of professional branches not belonging to the medical field.

"The exhibit—that's what it seemed like to me—ended with the exclamations that were to be expected: 'incredible,' 'amazing,' 'a milestone in evolution,' '... must be further study.' But there were also the more cautious phrases, '... reserve opinion pending additional examination and irrefutable verification,' 'should be more exhaustive tests,' '... must consult with colleagues before we accept as concrete . . . ' "

**H**ULDORN got up and stared out my window before he resumed his seat and continued talking. In the stronger light by the wide window, the hump stood out more prominently, and again I sent my memory backtracking. The professional introduction of Huldorn had been mentioned only passingly, for it was the very next day after that presentation that Berdarnt's article in the medical journal appeared.

The response was immediate and enthusiastic.

Press services picked up the story and carried it. The initial articles were noncommittal, wary. However, they created public interest.

Huldorn was no longer a private individual pursuing a relatively cloistered existence. He was now the property of a curious humanity. Reporters and photographers surrounded him and invaded his private life before the ink was dry on the morning editions carrying the wire stories.

Demonstration after demonstration was demanded and consented to by Huldorn. Flashbulbs set up an almost continuous flickering on the lawn in front of the professor's residence as photographers etched on their plates scenes of Huldorn suspended in the air, floating over the heads of other newsmen, skirting chimneys at rooftop level.

Berdarnt's scientific explanation of the phenomenon that was occurring went practically unnoticed, buried at the bottom of the stories in almost all papers. Columns of type preceded the explanation — paragraphs hailing Huldorn as the "Man Who Could Fly," "the New Superman," "the Marvel of the Age."

But Huldorn's acclaim was short-lived. Editorial comment in several of the country's leading papers on the following day was caustic.

"An intriguing, entertaining feat," one editorialist had said. "But, to assume that a single individual has discovered the means of defying

gravity and cloaking himself with a 'negative weight' is utterly preposterous."

Another editorialist had added, "What will the unfolding of future events show?—Huldorn to be the new type of man that has been claimed of him?—Or, Huldorn, the professor of psychology, to be just what his title implies, a master psychologist—one who perhaps understands the intricate workings of the human mind so completely that he has become a master illusionist, a worker of miracles through the sensational but rational medium of mass hypnotism?"

Other editorial pages followed with skepticism, some with ridicule.

HULDORN'S eyes shone with a bitter light as he looked at me.

"You see, Paul," he sighed. "What I had feared was already beginning to happen. After the initial thrill, the skeptics came forward and commanded the show, refusing to believe that which they could not understand. I was a menace—a menace that threatened the continued existence of humanity on the plane that it had occupied for thousands, hundreds of thousands of years. What they could not understand they would ostracize and eliminate."

"But, professor," I asked curiously, "why should the opinion of the average person have had anything to do with your acceptance by the scientific world?"

"Why, Paul?" he sighed. "Intelligence and knowledge are just a veneer that temporarily covers and shunts aside basic composition. People are still animals, subject to blinding animal impulses and instincts . . . I discovered that almost immediately.

"First, my wife, who had wired that she was returning just after the first news accounts appeared, failed to come back after the editorial comments followed.

"Then I found that physicians, physicists, others who had seemed eager to study me, had changed their minds under pressure of the press. Some found harsh excuses to offer when they canceled appointments. Others explained they feared loss of professional prestige by being connected with a hoax; they said they would be willing to reconsider should the public attitude change. There were still others who had bluntly denied the possibility of my powers and said they could be explained on no other basis except hypnosis."

Huldorn had remained a public figure several months, even long after the university had decided not to retain him on the faculty as a result of adverse publicity.

The professor continued his story. He told how Berdarnt alone remained loyal to him; how the physician had decided that continued effort toward thrusting Huldorn on the doubting public would be fruitless; how they had selected a course of further study, observation and wait-

ing.

Berdarnt was certain the organ was still in a developing stage. He felt that when it reached maturity there would be other manifestations of its power. And he was not very wrong.

Huldorn had spent most of the ensuing five years in the seclusion of the physician's country estate. During that time, however, the professor was not free of the sarcastic, ridiculing press. He was rediscovered from time to time and, like a nova, reappeared on front pages throughout the country. And each time that an additional long period of seclusion seemed to remove him further into the realm of legend, he would be "rediscovered" by some enterprising journalist and again his name would flare into prominence.

"THE entire experience made me rather bitter," Huldorn told me. "But I was not through with my altruistic intentions. It was at the end of that five-year period of partial seclusion that I made another discovery.

"It was from the huge field in the rear of Berdarnt's country home that I had taken off for a flight that afternoon. By then, the periods of levitation came effortlessly. Perhaps the organ had developed completely. Utilization of the organ required no more exertion than that made necessary by walking, or even breathing.

"I soared up swiftly through a towering mass of cumulus clouds

and broke out near the top about ten—or twelve—thousand feet. Usually, I remained out of clouds for fear of vertigo. So, while climbing through that cloud, I had imagined I would become wet.

"Until that particular evening, the exhilarating experience of free flight had been so overpowering that I had never sought to analyze any other sensations attendant to flight . . . This time, however, because I was concentrating on learning whether I was wet or dry, my senses were alert.

"It was then that I suddenly became acutely aware of the wind rushing past my nostrils. I also realized that there should have been an area of low pressure in the vicinity of the space beneath my nose which should have hindered breathing. As I wondered why I could breathe so easily despite the handicap, I discovered that I *wasn't breathing at all!* It was then that I realized it probably had been years since I had breathed in flight!

"The discovery additionally resulted in a more acute awareness of myself. I suddenly wondered why my eyelids were not fluttering and I was able to see clearly. I suppose I was at an altitude of about twenty-thousand feet when I decided to bring my hand to my face to touch my eyelids experimentally . . .

"At first, my arm would not respond. When it did, it did so gradually and with great effort. I knew the effort I mustered was more than what was required to overcome

wind resistance . . . And, as my arm moved, that member became aware of the intense cold in the upper regions. The rest of my body was comfortably warm! I ignored the cold and could see the hand and fingers approaching my face; felt my eyelids. They were closed!

"Through some additional miracle of the hump I was able to see with a faculty other than my eyes! Here was something that made free flight possible, allowed me to see without looking, and additionally shielded my body from frictional heat and atmospheric cold.

"Stricken with this startling fact, I continued upward, not devoting my attention to the flight, but only reflection on what I had discovered. I don't know how many thousands of feet I rose—how many miles. Finally, I slowed my ascent until there was no longer any sensation of motion. Imagining that I was standing perfectly still, I waited . . .

"Like ink seeping into a blotter, I felt the cold of the atmosphere creep through my clothes and into my flesh. Suddenly I was aware that my skin felt as though it were coming back to life after having been dead for ages.

"Still fighting the below-zero temperature, I felt the surface on other parts of my body—my cheeks, neck, calves. The skin was hard—stonelike!

"Suddenly I was trying to breathe again. And I couldn't. I gasped. But the air was too thin to supply the oxygen I needed. Frightened,



I started my descent. As my speed increased, the sensation of suffocation disappeared. I no longer needed to breathe . . . And I suspected that the same rigid condition that had possessed my body on the way up had seized it again—protecting me not only from cold, but also from the reduced pressure of the high altitude!”

ACCORDING to newspaper records, Huldorn told Berdarnt of these latest discoveries. It had been several years since Berdarnt had made a complete inspection of the professor's body. But the physician felt such a course of action was again in order and subjected Huldorn to a month's observation.

Berdarnt subsequently announced he had discovered that the neural connection between the hump and the remainder of the body was a glandular control network. The glands, located on the surface of the body as profusely as pores in the skin, secreted a substance while the professor was in flight. That substance defied analysis but was potent enough to form an almost unassailable shield enclosing every exposed part—a shell that was temperature and pressure resistant.

“But, then the press was on my neck again. I had flared once more into the public eye. And the staunch skeptics of more than five years earlier were eager to repeat their denunciations.

“I had thought farther ahead of Berdarnt, however. I had seen suf-

ficiently into the future to realize what use could be made of the powers that were granted to me by the hump.

“My next disappearance from society was abrupt—straight into the air and away. Of course, there was a test first. I rose to a height—a tremendous altitude — from which the earth appeared as a huge ball. Then I circled the sphere, mustering as much speed as I could, knowing I was protected from the cold of space. The circuit around the Earth seemed to require only a short while. But, under those conditions, there was no way of judging time passage.

“So, when I had completed the lap, I returned to my starting point on the surface. The entire flight required only a little more than an hour! I had traversed some fifty-thousand miles of space in about an hour's time! And I know instinctively that even greater speed was at my disposal! There was the additional gratifying realization that while I was in motion, my body was practically in a state of suspended animation.”

LATER reports at legal hearings established the fact that Huldorn had made a small, air-tight and pressure-resistant metal container which he strapped around his body as a receptacle for small amounts of food and water.

Those reports, I recalled, also quoted Huldorn in fantastic descriptions of the moon's surface; loca-

tion of huge meteors in space, the nearness of which he said he sensed through an additional special faculty. The professor told of the great wasting plains of Mars, the super heated sunside of Mercury and the weird ice formations he discovered on its other side. Huldorn recounted his complete investigations of other planets—his descent through the fog of Venus' atmosphere only to find a landless planet with a formaldehyde atmosphere which he knew he should not breathe. He described Mars' rare but breathable air that made movement sluggish and fatiguing; told how he had found two other satellites in the solar system habitable—one of the planet Jupiter and the other of Saturn.

The pictures he produced (he was said to have taken a camera with him on one year-long jaunt) seemed authentic, but they were laughed off as remarkable reproductions of manufactured scenery, even the one of the Earth taken from an air-filled crater of the moon.

All those descriptions were later allowed as testimony in court. It was entered by his attorneys with the hope it would help prove the sincerity and veracity of his claims. Its admission was not protested by states attorneys who were sure that its utterly fantastic nature would help prove their case.

"Yes," Huldorn sighed, drawing my attention again, "those ten years following my disappearance from Berdarnt's home were spent almost

completely removed from humanity. I returned only occasionally. When I did, I remained away from locations where I might be recognized.

"When I saw Berdarnt again, I found him only coolly receptive to my return. You must remember that he, too, suffered ridicule as a result of his connections with me. He politely listened to my tales of space and interplanetary travel—was even enthusiastic at times. But he soon made it clear that he would not consider a future alliance."

**H**ULDORN had spent more than an hour in my office and had told me very little in addition to what I already knew about him. But I was patient. He finally entered into the account of the incident that had placed him outside the law.

Faced with Berdarnt's polite refusal to help him again, the professor had sought an interview with one of the physicists who was a close friend of Berdarnt. The physicist was not only cynical but openly hostile.

The incident was perhaps the most widely publicized in Huldorn's entire history. For the physicist—Markfair was his name—belligerently accused Huldorn of perpetrating one of the greatest frauds in history. Huldorn resented the accusation and an argument followed.

When Huldorn threatened to force Markfair to retract the charges, the physicist drew a gun from his drawer and leveled it at

the professor's head. Seized with a rage he could not control, Huldorn charged forward. The gun went off, the bullet grazing the professor's scalp.

The injury Huldorn inflicted on Markfair, however, was not superficial. He grasped the physicist by the throat seized a heavy glass vase from the desk, and brought it down on Markfair's head.

Perhaps the killing could have been excused as justifiable homicide—had not Huldorn used the gun to shoot down two policemen who attempted to arrest him.

**"I** FLED into the outer void again," Huldorn leaned closer to me and placed his elbows on his knees as he bowed his head. "But I couldn't stay away from the justice I knew I should face. I felt no self-reprimand over killing Markfair. The killing of the two policemen was something else, however . . . But, Paul, it took a long time to make the decision to surrender myself—time that I used in coursing through the far reaches of space.

"When I returned and surrendered to authorities I found that Berdarht was still a friend. It was through him and a district attorney who was receptive to his pleadings that a sanity hearing was decided upon. Witnesses at the hearings were like ghosts from the past coming to accuse me. Everyone seemed to be there except my wife. She knew from the beginning that

she had fled a madman."

"And the rest is history, is it not, professor?" I asked, thinking of the two years he had spent in the mental institution before he escaped and disappeared until now.

"No, Paul," he shook his head. "The rest is not history. There is more to the story—more that the world does not know. I do not fear telling it to you, for you would never be believed should you repeat it. But you should know the complete story . . .

"You see, Paul, I am not the only one. There are others—like myself—despite the fact that the mutation is recessive and may not be repeated in my strain of immediate descendants. Those others are descendants of mutants who were produced during the past few hundred years in our race's history. You see, the conditions that are causing the mutation are becoming stronger and the mutants are coming in increasing numbers . . .

"But a hostile parent race quickly eliminates them—forces them to flee."

**I** BECAME acutely attentive, sitting on the edge of my chair. I almost felt like grasping Huldorn's shoulders as I asked:

"Where, professor? Where have they fled?"

He leaned back in his chair. "The colony is near the southern polar cap of Mars, close to the junction of the three major canals. There the colony lives and grows. Someday

—how many generations off I do not know—they may perhaps outnumber the branch of the race on Earth. Then, we may be able to reclaim our heritage. But, until then, we will have to be content with an occasional visit here. And, who knows, in those visits we may be able to help another of our kind toward an awareness of the significance of his organ.

"In my case, Paul, the organ developed to maturity over a period of almost ten years. But, had someone told me what it was, the conscious realization of its significance would have brought about maturity in a matter of only a few months . . . It was another mutant who helped me escape from the institution—the descendant of a woman who was almost slain in Salem during the witchcraft days . . . On Mars, where the mutation is a dominant characteristic only mutants are born."

Huldorn was silent for a while. I knew he was now about to tell me why he was in my office.

"You see, Paul, you are my son . . . I had to make sure that my own son knew the truth about his father—even if everyone else scorned him."

Behind the expression of surprise on my face, I remembered how my mother had pretended my father had died before I was born—when, actually, she had fled from him before telling him she was pregnant.

The professor clasped me and turned to leave. It was then I real-

ized that my surprise was not feigned—that it was only a belated expression of the sensation I actually felt the moment I had seen him enter the office.

"I know that I can't expect you to feel toward me as a son would feel toward his father," he said as he backed out the door. "But, at least I have had the satisfaction of seeing you and of convincing you that your father is not a fraud."

Then he was gone.

I REMAINED standing behind my draftboard for minutes that seemed like hours, as a startling fact entered my consciousness.

What were the main statements he had made that I wanted to remember?—Oh, yes. There were two:

" . . . With conscious realization of the significance of the hump, the organ will achieve maturity in a matter of months . . .

" . . . Near the south polar cap, at the junction of the three main canals . . . "

You see, Professor Huldorn—dad—was wrong about the mutant gene being recessive. It isn't. At least, it wasn't in my case. Even as I stared reflectively out the window and wondered how long it would be before the small lump between my shoulder blades would be capable of sustaining interplanetary flight, and even as I envisioned the subsequent reunion with dad, I was aware that the soles of my shoes had risen a good couple of inches above the floor.

# ★ *Operation Ptarmigan* ★

EXPLORERS of a half century or seventy-five years ago, despite their comparable lack of knowledge of meteorology, did agree that the Arctic Regions in the neighborhood of the North Pole constituted the world's "weather factory." Modern meteorologists heartily agree with this idea and it is a known fact that the world's weather is made in that cold grim Polar factory.

Three, or even two decades ago a trip to the North Pole for meteorological research was as different as it was for the man of Peary's caliber, the few men who slogged their way on foot and by dog sled into a terrain whose very nature was impossibly cruel. The airplane was just becoming the wide-ranging bird it is now.

Realization of the importance of Polar flying (not only because of the threat of the Russian bear!) has caused the Air Force and U. S. meteorologists to set up what is undoubtedly the world's strangest airline. The operation is called "Ptarmigan" after the Arctic bird and it is conducted by stripped-down B-29's, which fly a regular day-in, day-out schedule over the wastes of the North Pole. They make a four thousand mile round trip in less than seventeen hours and their recording instruments come back laden with useful information, information which enables world weather maps to be plotted.

The tremendous success of this meteorological expedition suggests that a similar one be set up for the South Polar Regions, and work is being done on this project. While

the South Pole is less important—since the world's land masses predominate in the Northern zones, it still is part of the Earth's weather factory. In not too many years, planes will wing their way over the even more forbidding regions of the South Pole.

The ultimate step in world-wide meteorology, will of course, be the use of remote-controlled planes, or robot missiles, whose function will be to soak up data on automatic instruments and deliver it to a central headquarters. In fact, it is the subconscious plan of meteorologists everywhere to have the world criss-crossed with a network of data collecting planes or missiles so that the weather conditions of the entire world can be known.

Obviously the complete answer to this problem will be the development of the "satellite station", which, floating a couple of thousand miles above the Earth's surface, will be able to survey every square inch of the Earth, will be able to note every cloud, every storm and every change in weather conditions. By correlating and combining all these data, an absolute weather map may be made, and the weather can be predicted for months in advance when the regular, over-all pattern is known. The satellite station will make important operations like that of "Ptarmigan" superfluous, and the weatherman will become right on ninety-nine per cent of his predictions, rather than nine per cent! Meanwhile, makeshift "Operation Ptarmigan" will do the job!

★ ★ ★



*Conducted by Mari Wolf*

THE other evening while I was out walking, not even thinking science fiction, I found a young spaceman, complete with ray-gun and comet insignia, sitting nonchalantly in the middle of Monroe Street. The cars didn't seem to bother him in the least. Nor did the fact that he was a little young to go wandering around even his home planet all alone—he couldn't have been more than three years old.

"Hello," he said, waving the gun around as if he couldn't make up his mind whether or not to shoot me the way they do on television.

"Hello," I said, helping him up off the pavement and removing him from the path of an oncoming automobile. "Where's your mommy?"

"My name's Jimmy," he informed me, and that was all the information I could get out of him.

He followed me to the sidewalk quite docilely, holding onto my hand as if he'd known me for a long time. Standing up he didn't look quite so officially a spaceman, mainly be-

cause his clothes seemed to want to fall off him, but he obviously already had the spirit of an adventurer. He showed no desire at all to go home. He didn't even seem to know, or care, where home was.

I felt a bit silly, not to say helpless, leading him down the street in what was probably the wrong direction (it was, I found out later) knocking on doors and asking the inhabitants if they knew where Jimmy belonged. It was getting dark, and I imagined that his mother would be getting frantic. But no one claimed him.

No one, that is until I met a woman who said casually, "Oh, yes, he lives next door to me. But it's all right. You shouldn't have bothered. He's always wandering off . . . Come on, Jimmy, I'll take you home."

Jimmy transferred himself from me to her as happily as ever and toddled off homeward, his oversized ray gun holster banging against his leg with every step.

And there, I thought, goes a future fan . . .

Maybe he'll turn out to be a typical fan of tomorrow. Or maybe he won't give a rap about science fiction once he outgrows the raygun-uniform stage. Or maybe someday he'll *really* be a spaceman, exploring the starways as self-reliantly as he now explores Monroe Street.

But if he does turn out to be a typical fan, what's he going to be like? What will fandom tomorrow be like? Like it is today? Will fans still be publishing fanzines and writing letters to editors and getting together in clubs with other fans? Or will the most active stf enthusiasts merely be passive readers, TV-ers, and movie goers who like science fiction immensely but have no desire to write fan letters or put out amateur magazines?

It's hard to say. For one thing, today's science fiction fans are almost unique in their articulate devotion to their favorite field. There are, for example, many devotees of detective stories or of westerns, but there are very few, if any, who put out amateur detective or western magazines or who make a practice of writing to the magazines or to each other. The interest in reading in the field is there, but not the interest in banding together with others of similar tastes. (Except among the younger-fry, who can send in two box tops from somebody's cereal and get a real, genuine cowboy hat and membership in So-and-so's Rangers.)

Of course even in science fiction the majority of readers never become active fans. But there is always the active minority, those to whom science fiction means a lot more than just something to read. Why? Probably for lots of reasons . . .

And one of those reasons may well lie in the very quality that makes a science fiction story so dif-

ferent from any other type—the fact that its action takes place in an unknown environment, perhaps that of an alien world, perhaps that of our own future, but always outside the framework of known cultural continuity that we call history.

OTHER fields of literature concern either the present or the known past. You have in today's fiction many types of stories—modern love and historical love; present day detective, “realism,” and adventure; glamorized tales of the wild west and of other romanticized periods ranging from the days of the noble highwaymen who stole from the rich and gave to the poor to the days of when knights were bold and chivalry reigned supreme.

Often the present is depicted realistically in fiction. But in stories of the past usually the characters are somewhat bigger than life and their problems become more nearly black and white—as in the stories of the western hero, the beautiful maiden whose father's ranch is mortgaged, and the evil villain who is determined to collect either the mortgaged money or aforementioned beautiful maiden . . . The knights-were-bold stories are this way too, only more so, with the beautiful lily-fair damsel who swoons at the sight of the Black Knight and then swoons again, but happily this time, when her own true love comes galloping, in the nick of time, to her rescue.

And tracing literature farther back, to the sagas of the Norsemen and the epics of the Greeks, you find the same division. The attitude that today might be rather ordinary but that yesterday men were men and the good old days were wonderful. Then, according to the stories, with only your strong right arm and your trusty sword you could carve

out a kingdom, and if you didn't live happily ever after at least you'd be sung about and talked about for generations to come. (As to the point of view of the slaves and peasants of these glamorized periods of history, it's usually overlooked as being not nearly so interesting.)

Finally you get back to the early legends of a people's history—to the culture heroes like King Arthur and Roland and Hercules, and even farther back to the men who lived at the dawn of history and were semi-divine, supermen, invincible to ordinary weapons. Here you find the giant figures—the hero, the villain, the tragic maiden, the temptress, the brother who is good and the brother who is evil, the cast-out prince-ling who grows up in ignorance of his background but nevertheless becomes king . . .

They are the archtypes, the culture heroes and villains and victims you find in every culture, in every part of the world. They are the strong points—and the weak points—of mankind personified, cast into universal figures, one-sided in personality and incredibly appealing to the imagination.

You find them everywhere in legend, and in their native habitats they are not cardboard figures, one-sided though they may be. Each is a symbol of one aspect of humanity, and together they are mankind, bigger than life perhaps but psychologically true to it.

And what do these figures of legend, of myth, have to do with science fiction and with science fiction fans? Quite a bit, actually. For despite civilization and sophistication the old archtypes have never quite died out. Children find them over and over again in fairy tales. The tritest horse opera features them, cut down from giant size into two-

dimensional paper caricatures. But in a world where only children can believe in a legendary past the archtype figures can find only one believable home—the future.

And there you find them. Not, of course, in all science fiction. The "mature" story, like today's contemporary story, deals not with archtypes but with lifesize, lifelike people, neither black nor white but varying shades of gray. But you won't have to look far to find the old figures, changed somewhat, invincible because of their science instead of because of their magic, their enemies aliens instead of witches or dragons. (For isn't the BEM an archetype too?)

Cardboard figures are in many a space opera—and incredibly three-dimensional and alive in many sf classics. Hero and villain, maiden and temptress, man and man's enemies, all stalk across a cosmos that once was the good old days—but now is the multitude of brave new worlds that may come true tomorrow . . .

And probably, no matter which world comes true, there will be fans in it, articulate as ever . . .

WITH this Boxful of fanzines there comes a letter from Calvin Thomas Beck, 84-16 Elmhurst Ave., Elmhurst 73, Queens, L.I., New York. It's about the newly reorganized American Science-Fantasy Society, and I'm passing it on to you.

"We would appreciate hearing from any serious fans living in or near the N.Y.C. metropolitan area.

"The requirements for membership are as follows:

"That a prospective member have at least two years of intense activity as an *active-fan*; or if there isn't such a background evident, a good equivalent would be a thorough



knowledge of some contemporary sfantasy fiction, books, writers, and the field in general, plus a better than nodding acquaintance of early, or old, sfantasy fiction, etc. A vague understanding or superficial idea of the field and its fiction simply isn't enough.

"Membership is restricted to those sixteen years of age and over. The only exception to this rule would be in very extraordinary cases.

"However, the most important system we use in gaining members is always according to recommendation only. If those interested in becoming members wish to apply, the usual procedure is by attending one of our meetings.

"We are no a fan club in the old sense of the word but rather a committee-group and organization with, we trust, a permanent goal. The program still in the blue-print stage should be of interest to not only fans but professionals as well.

"Furthermore, we propose to sponsor quarterly conclaves in some convenient area in the city as soon as possible. We'll do all we can to put New York City on the map as the center of Stfantasy Fandom and Science-Fantasy Fiction as soon and as best as possible. To this purpose does the American Science-Fantasy Society dedicate itself.

"It is also important that everyone know this is a club for anyone—just anyone—sincerely interested in sfantasy fiction. This is regardless of whether he's an amateur or professional in the field.

"Our prime objective is to increase interest in the sfantasy field in all directions, bolster up New York City as a center of activity, and bring as many interested as possible in close touch with each other, in meetings, conclaves, and other things we will have on our programs."

Okay, there it is . . . Any of you active fans living in New York who are interested, Beck's address is at the top of this letter.

\* \* \*

FANTASY-TIMES: 10c; twice a month; James V. Taurasi, 137-03 32nd Ave., Flushing 54, N.Y. Here's your science fiction newspaper, just about the best and quickest way to keep up on what's going on in the stf field. In fact, just now as I was looking over my review copy I learned that a movie I want to see is ready for release, a new magazine is entering the field, an old one is leaving it, and Tarzan's mate is going to get killed off in the movie serials so that Tarzan can have lots of girl friends.

Also there's fan news, foreign news (both fan and pro)—just about everything of interest to science fiction enthusiasts. And it's all for one thin dime.

\* \* \*

VIEWS IN SF: 10c; monthly; Menasha Brodie, 3315 Pinkney Road, Baltimore 15, Md. Views' fanzine editor, Raleigh Evans Multog, sends along some data on the zine and the Baltimore fanclub which I'd like to pass on to you.

"Views in Science Fiction is the monthly bulletin of the Baltimore Science Fiction Forum. Published the 15th. of each month at Baltimore, Md. Subscription rates are: 12 issues for \$1.00, 10c per copy. Send money to Menasha Brodie. For further information about our Baltimore Stf Club address Dick Clarkson, President, 410 Kensington Road, Balto. 29 . . .

"We need original material such as poetry, articles, fiction, etc. Same thing goes with humorous stuff. If anybody wants his fanzine mentioned in this zine, will he please send a copy of his own zine

to Raleigh Evans Multog, Fanzine Editor, 7 Greenwood Rd., Pikesville 8, Md."

Ray Sienkiewicz and the rest of the Forum put out a really good active fanzine. And if you're anywhere near Baltimore, why not drop in at the club?

\* \* \*

OOPSLA: 10c; published every six weeks; Gregg Calkins, 761 Oakley St., Salt Lake City, Utah. In the issue I have here Ray Capella runs a story with the intriguing title, "The Soggy Saga of Hor. I. Bobble," complete with a mad scientist, zombies, and a BEM. (But no luscious blonde, brunette, or red-head.)

Wilkie Conner discusses the fan-mag annishes—anniversary issues—those extra big and extra special zines put out on special occasions. And they're hard work too, as Wilkie points out, with some 40 or 50 or more pages of stencils to be cut and usually just one or two people doing the typing. (Oops!a's coming up with a special issue soon now, too. It's to be a Wawish—Waw for Irish fan Walter A. Willis.)

Seen Oops!a lately? If not, you are missing a lot of fun . . .

\* \* \*

CURRENT SCIENCE FICTION: 15c; Ronald S. Friedman, Intergalactic Publications, Box 1329, Grand Central Station, New York 17, N.Y. This fanzine is chock full of fan news, handily divided into regions, so you can find out at a glance what's going on in the South, the New York area, etc. Also it covers science news of special interest to fans, tidbits that might be overlooked in the back pages of newspapers.

Oh, yes, a note on the back cover points out that "Intergalactic" isn't "Intergalactic," but comes from Inter-Gala-Tic and means "a mes-

sage between happy and gay friends, always arriving on time."

\* \* \*

CONFUSION: no price listed; monthly; Shelby Vick, Box 493, Lynn Haven, Fla. Here's the zine with the little Vic-men—long headed and happy looking as ever. I just love 'em . . . Of course, mixed in among the illos are the articles they're illustrating—Lee Hoffman's column, Pilau (pronounced Per-loo) and Walt Willis' Plinth from Ireland. (But what in heck, if anything, does Plinth mean?)

Bill Morse writes an article, "The Recurrent Fever," which describes the apparently incurable addiction to science fiction from the British point of view.

All in all, if you feel in need of amusin' just send for Confusion. It's fun!

\* \* \*

ALIEN: 10c bimonthly; Vic Waldrop, Jr., 212 West Ave., Cartersville, Ga. Here's a brand-new fanzine put out by a new club—the Alien Science-Fantasy Club. However, you can join even if you're not an alien. Even Earthmen are accepted . . .

The club is principally a correspondence club, and the fanzine a general interest zine. The first issue contains news, Confederate news by Lee Hoffman, and a poem of Earth in destruction, "After the Blast," by Editor Waldrop.

Good luck, Aliens, and welcome to Terra . . .

\* \* \*

STFANEWS: 5c; monthly; Saturn Publications, 36 Liberty St., Newark 2, N.J. Here's the newsiest nickel's worth you're likely to come across, covering all phases of fan activity. In the issue I have here, space is divided between David Ingham's "In the Fan Publishing

World," which is a comprehensive series of fanzine reviews, and Ronald S. Friedman's "Scientifictional Organizations," which tells a lot about a lot of fan clubs and their doings. Very informative write-ups, and of special interest to those who like quick capsule reviews of fan activities all over the country.

\* \* \*

**PHANTASMAGORIA:** published irregularly; Derek Pickles, 22 Marshfield Place, Bradford, Yorks, England. Price is 9d a copy, but Americans may trade one pro magazine for two issues.

Phantasmagoria is one of my favorite amateur magazines, not so much for its format (it is mimeoed on large length paper) but for its contents, which are varied in subject matter but of uniformly high reader interest. For example, the copy I have here includes some top fan fiction, such as Clive Jackson's humorously macabre "The Men Who Came to Dinner." Or—what does a Martian vampire eat on Earth?

So if you have a back copy of **MADGE** you're not reading, why not send it to Derek Pickles? Some British fan will really enjoy it, and you'll enjoy Phantasmagoria too.

\* \* \*

**CATACLYSM:** 10c published irregularly by Brian McNaughton, 198 Bergen Place, Red Bank, N.J. Robert E. Briney edits this poetry fanzine, and as usual he's come up with some top poems by some top fan writers. It's really impossible to pick favorites—tastes in poetry vary too widely and those I'd like might not be those you'd like. But you'll find a real selection here—by Andrew Duane, Lin Carter, Marion Zimmer Bradley (whose "Jekhara: A Martian City" really captures a mood), Michael DeAngelo and many others.

Of course, if you don't like poetry at all you won't like *Cataclysm*, but if you do like it, in any form, don't miss this zine.

\* \* \*

**SPACE MAGAZINE:** 15c; quarterly; David Ingraham, Saturn Publications, 36 Liberty St., Newark 2, N.J. In the issue I have here of "Fandom's Clearing House," James R. Adams has a chilling little story, "Secret Agent." It's on the old theme of alien invaders who can be seen by only one man—but the ending's rather different from what you'd probably expect.

Bob Silverberg's department, "Science Fiction - Past and Present" goes into the history of the different pro magazines and the men who produce them and gives plenty of background for newer fans. All in all, *Space* is a very readable zine with an excellent format.

\* \* \*

**OPERATION FANTAST HANDBOOK:** Captain K. F. Slater (RPC), No. 28 PCLU Detachment, BAOR 29 (c/o G.P.O. England). This is the yearly handbook put out by *Operation Fantast*, the British fanzine which offers so many services to its subscriber-members all over the world. Membership in OF is 75c a year in the U. S. and includes the four issues of *Operation Fantast*, as well as the opportunity to avail yourself of OF services. One of these is the postal library, whose USA branch enables fans in this country to borrow British stf books and pocket books at a nominal charge.

There are lots of other interesting facets to OF, including the chance to get to know fans all over the world. It's worth more than 75c, too. If you want more information, just write to Captain Slater. You'll be glad you did . . .

\* \* \*

**NEWSSCOPE:** 5c; monthly; Laurence R. Campbell, 43 Tremont St., Malden 48, Mass. Subtitled "The Fan's Newszine," Newsscope carries reports on fan doings all over the world. There are columns on British s-f activities and on Australian s-f activities, as well as reports on U. S. clubs, book reviews, and reports on other fanzines.

And if you're interested in being a fan reporter-correspondent, get in touch with Campbell. He needs some . . .

But the present staff manages to gather and pass on to its readers a lot of news—and for only half a dime a month, too.

\* \* \*

**ORB:** 35c; published irregularly by Bob Johnson, 1005 E. 60th. St., Chicago 37, Ill. Orb is really a "quality" magazine in the fan publishing field. Its slogan is "the unusual in imaginative fiction," and that's just what you'll find published here. The stories are definitely *not* amateur in quality—in fact, Orb is the one fan magazine I know of that has had stories selected for anthologizing by a professional publisher.

Among the stories in the copy I have here are two, off-trail in very different directions, that I liked especially. One David Bunch's "In the Globe of Changing Glass," is a delicate, symbolic fantasy. The other, Jim Harmon's "The Prejudiced People," is an unforgettable tale of ultimate bigotry.

35c is definitely a reasonable price for work of this caliber.

\* \* \*

**APPROACH TO INFINITY:** by Morris Scott Dollens; 30c; Roy A. Squires, 1745 Kenneth Road, Glendale 1, Calif. This isn't a fanzine, really. It's a collection of Dollens' artwork—and that's description

enough for those of you who have seen his covers for the Science Fiction Advertiser. If you haven't seen his work you've missed some of the top imaginative drawings being done today — half-tone, photo-montage scenes symbolic of man, the stars, and infinity.

A beautifully done collection of drawings and text you'll be proud to own, easily worth your 30c.

\* \* \*

**VULCAN:** published quarterly by Peter Graham, 138 Laidley St., San Francisco, Calif. The issue I have here is the first, and it's being distributed mainly through FAPA (Fantasy Amateur Press Association). But Peter Graham will send you a copy on request—although he requests at least a 2c stamp to cover postage.

The old argument has risen again—brought up by Terry Carr. When is science fiction not science fiction? When is it fantasy, and where's the dividing line? No answers—just a good opening for answering articles. Probably start a hot debate, too . . .

\* \* \*

**PSFS NEWS:** published by the Philadelphia Science Fiction Society, 1614 Locust St., Philadelphia, Pa. The News is a very chatty sheet telling all about PSFS doings—and a mighty active club it sounds like too! They seem to have fascinating guest speakers, such as the hypnotist who put most of them to sleep . . .

If you're around Philadelphia why not write for further details? Maybe drop in on one of the meetings and get in on the fun.

**T**HAT'S all the fanzines. But there's a letter in the Box this time, from Orville W. Mosher, 1728 Mayfair, Emporia, Kansas, about a really ambitious project he has undertaken together with fans Shelby

Vick, Nan Gerding, and Dick Clarkson.

"PROJECT FAN CLUB is the name of the movement to collect material on all fan organizations. We are endeavoring to learn about all fan organizations — national, international, as well as local. The end result is to be a booklet on how to form a science fiction club.

"Project Fan Club will bring closer unity to those interested in active fandom because it will be designed to encourage organizing fan clubs, tell how to organize them and keep them going, tell fans about other fan organizations operating close by and something about their operations.

"When the booklet comes out it will be priced as low as cost of materials and other expenditures will

allow—this is definitely not a money-making deal."

Included with Orville Mosher's letter is the questionnaire he's sending out to fans and fan clubs, a questionnaire gathering data about the formation, affiliations, programming, etc. of their clubs. When the data is correlated it should really give a complete picture of fandom.

So if you have a fan club, or if you'd like to start one, write in to Orville Mosher. Maybe he can help you, and you can help the Project.

\* \* \*

And remember, send any fanzines you want reviewed here to me, Mari Wolf, FANDORA'S BOX, IMAGINATION, P. O. Box 230, Evanston, Ill.

See you next month!

—MARI WOLF

## INTRODUCING the AUTHOR

★ S. J. Byrne ★

*(Concluded from Page 2)*

lege (U.C.L.A.). But the war took me into aircraft plants, and my training there plus a smattering of Spanish took me and the family to South America, in 1943, where I was Stores Manager for the Pan American-Grace Airways, in Lima, Peru. Nice work if you can get it. I traveled for years through Panama, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, Chile, Bolivia, Argentina, Uruguay, Brazil, not to mention Central America, and I became pretty familiar with

Incan lore and the Andes.

Upon returning to the U.S. in 1947 I went to Chicago and met Ray Palmer, Bill Hamling, Dick Shaver and Chet Geier. That meeting crystallized all my desires in regard to Science Fiction writing. I've been hard at it ever since, except for two and a half years on Guam working for a construction company. I hope to be at it a long time to come!

S. J. Byrne

# Letters from the Readers

## FOUR BELL MAGAZINE!

Dear Ed:

Three weeks ago I saw my first copy of IMAGINATION, the July issue. I heard that it was quite a good magazine so I bought it and read it. Frankly, my illusions were shattered with that particular issue. I had read many of the stories along similar lines before—not one of them seemed worthy of being in a top stf magazine.

I waited until the September issue came out, the other day, and now after reading it—what a difference! Take the lead novel, THE WEAPON FROM ETERNITY. Now there is a story! It's a combination of Edgar Rice Burroughs and Burt L. Standish and E. P. Oppenheim rolled into one. Fantasy, action and interplanetary intrigue—in my estimation a FOUR BELL story. It was all I could do to lay it down; to date it's the best story I've had the pleasure of reading.

IT KUD HABBEN TU YU was also good, but I rate it a 2 bell yarn; THE DANGEROUS DOLL, and THEFT rate 3 bells. Then we come to TOMORROW THE WORLD! another splendid novelette and surely deserving FOUR BELLS—in fact

the magazine does! Keep up this kind of story presentation and you've got a reader for life.

Warren A. Gregory  
4 Market Square  
Marblehead, Mass.

*Your praise of the September issue is modestly accepted . . . shucks, we thought it was good too! But say, Warren, you mean you didn't like the TOFFEE story in the July issue? You sure you read it? . . . Anyway, you can rest assured you'll get top stories of the kind you prefer in coming issues of Madge . . . wth*

## CONSISTENTLY GOOD

Dear Ed:

Having purchased and read the September issue of Madge I have decided that your magazine is going to be consistently good, so herewith my subscription to your great publication.

I am of the opinion, along with other readers, that a personal column would be a fine addition to Madge. I like to write to fellow readers, but prefer ones my own age, 27, and single rather than married fans. I'm particularly interested in locating a fan in this locality who might be interested in going up

to the Griffith Park Observatory here in LA to attend their lectures. Anyone interested? *a.*

Until next issue, congratulations on a fine magazine.

Carl W. Garrison  
1231 E. 19th St.  
Long Beach 6, Cal.

*Ok, fans, if you want a personals column start sending in your notices. Anything from pen-pals to trading magazines. You name it . . . with*

## WHAT, NO TRUMPETS?

Dear Bill:

As this is my first letter to Madge I was going to tell you how great I think it is but after reading your letter section, I see I am a little late. One thing I did miss in your letter section though was the fact that Madge is great because it has a great editor. You sure surprised me when with no fanfare and blowing of trumpets I read that Madge is going monthly and spotted the new back covers.

Going back over previous issues of Madge from the first few numbers in 1950 I can see the changes that have been made. You have really improved the magazine.

Thus far my favorite novels in Madge have been SPECIAL DELIVERY (January 1952 issue) and TONIGHT THE SKY WILL FALL! (May 1952 issue); the two covers I liked best were for the November 1951 issue and again, the May 1952 issue. I really enjoy all the departments from INTRODUCING THE AUTHOR, FANDORA'S BOX, and the LETTER department.

September was up to par; THE WEAPON FROM ETERNITY was enjoyable while I read it although it's nothing to look back on. Damon Knight turned out a good story, IT KUD HABBEN TU YU, but he can

do better. Galouye's DANGEROUS DOLL was the best in the issue. THEFT, was cute, and I'm glad to see another fan hit the professional ranks. TOMORROW THE WORLD! was very good, a really nice off-trail yarn.

Two requests before I sign off. Keep up the full length novels and leave serials out. Also, get another TOFFEE story as soon as you can. The one in the July issue was really enjoyable. Lots of luck.

Ivan Bernbach  
269-08- 80th Ave.

New Hyde Park, L. I., N. Y.

*Thanks for the personal compliment, Ivan. We'd be lying if we didn't say we liked hearing it. Your choice of favorite covers has an interesting sidelight: they were both photo-covers by Malcolm Smith. Along those lines you'll be seeing more photo-covers in the near future. Speaking of THEFT, and its author, Bill Venable, reminds us that Madge has introduced quite a few new writers to the field in the past year. You can rest assured we'll be bringing you other new writers with equal talent as time goes on. Madge is not restricted to "name" writers; we feel its the story that counts—and that's how top "names" are made. As to TOFFEE, Charlie Myers is working on a new story right now. . . . with*

## MORE CARTOONS

Dear Mr. Hámbling:

I finished reading the September issue of Madge last night and just want to tell you what a fine magazine you have. I never rate stories—because I like them all! Besides, we all have different tastes. I'll simply say that the stories, as usual, were all very good. However, I usually read the departments before the

stories.

I always read the editorial first. You have a pretty good one as a rule. I like the cartoons you put on the editorial page—get some more of them for the rest of the magazine. I especially like your new back cover feature. Keep those photographs there. I enjoy studying them very much.

I'm glad to know Madge is going monthly. How about enlarging the Reader section too?

Congratulations on a fine magazine and know you'll continue to improve.

Robert D. Godwin  
2539 Lyndale Ave., So.  
Minneapolis 5, Minn.

*Getting good cartoons is something of a problem, Bob. Here's an invite to all you science fiction cartoonists to submit your work to Madge. We're definitely in the market and we pay on acceptance . . . . . with*

## TOP-NOTCH IN EVERY WAY!

Dear Mr. Hamling:

Have just finished reading the September issue of Madge and I thought it was very good. I would rate Dan Galouye's DANGEROUS DOLL as tops—I really got a bang out of that story. Second best was TOMORROW THE WORLD! Here was a story with a breath-taking pace. Those two yarns made the issue a bang-up job. The shorts by Venable and Damon Knight were fine too; however, I can't say I cared particularly for Swain's lead novel. Those superman space operas sort of leave me cold. No doubt a great many of Madge's readers will place it at the top but I prefer my science fiction a little less on the blood and thunder side.

I would like to say in closing that I think Madge is one of the three

top science fiction magazines being published today. The format, artwork, the entire physical makeup of IMAGINATION is excellent; but more than that I feel that the quality of the stories is extremely high. That is all made possible by top-notch editorship—so thanks to you, Bill Hamling for providing science fiction enthusiasts with a really superb publication.

George Kruse

1830 Medford

Topeka, Kansas

*We'll be working hard to keep Madge right up there at the top, George. Watch coming issues! . . . And thanks for the nice words . . . with*

## BLUE RIBBON STORIES

Dear Ed:

I have just finished reading my second issue of Madge, the September number, and since a money order for a subscription is enclosed there is no point in telling you how well I like it.

I never was any good in passing out blue ribbons, but some of the yarns in this issue have left their impression on me. Taking the stories as they appear on the contents page I'd like to give you my reactions.

THE WEAPON FROM ETERNITY was a fairly good action-packed space opera, although it was perhaps a bit heavy with sensationalism.

IT KUD HABBEN TU YU: Mr. Knight had a comparatively new (to me) idea—and a pretty good one at that!

THE DANGEROUS DOLL left me cold—but frigid.

THEFT: an average of twenty of the stories I read every year are along this general theme . . .

TOMORROW THE WORLD! left me in a cold sweat! For a few min-



utes I wondered if the yarn was as probable as it seemed. How about asking Geoff St. Reynard to write a sequel? This story cries for one.

Well, that's all for now, except I'd like to say that letters from any fans will be welcomed and promptly answered.

A/1C James White

AF 19247861

2275th Base Service Sqdrn.

Beale AFB, Cal.

*We've already gotten in touch with St. Reynard and told him to write a sequel, Jim. How's that for service? And speaking of subscribing, how about the rest of you readers filling out the coupon on page 162 and sending it in—you'll get your copy ahead of newsstand publication and save money! . . . with*

#### A GOOD ISSUE, EXCEPT . . .

Dear Ed:

The September issue of IMAGINATION was a very enjoyable one except for the novel. I liked the short stories in the order of THEFT for its good clean humor; then, IT KUD HABBEN TU YU for the same reason; finally THE DANGEROUS DOLL, a very good short story. The novelette, TOMORROW THE WORLD! was exceptionally good.

I don't usually read the novels, but since all the shorts and the novelette were so good I decided to read Swain's story. PLEASE! Give me some kind of warning for such an awful story. No more Swain unless he learns to write!

Margaret Eldred

211 Lee St.

Pineville, La.

*Sorry you didn't care for Dwight's lead novel, Margaret, but then you thought the rest of the issue was top material so we know you like our brand of entertainment. As you can*

*see from other letters in this issue tastes differ—and that's one of Madge's aims, to try and please every science fiction reader in one way or another. It's not an easy job as you can see, but we're in there pitching! . . . with*

#### LONG NOVELS?

Dear Mr. Hamling:

I've only read a few issues of Madge, the last three as a matter of fact. Guess I just missed seeing it at the newsstands. I've been reading science fiction magazines for a few years now and I think I can say without reservation that in my opinion Madge is not the best in the field—I don't think any one magazine is better than the rest; they all have their good and bad points. However, I prefer Madge to *Astounding* and *Galaxy*.

Your covers are fine, but the interior illos are strictly for the, well, I don't like them. Somehow they all look alike. Can't you get a few Finlays, Poultons, and Cartiers? And why not run a *long* novel once in awhile? Or do you?

The best story in the September issue was TOMORROW THE WORLD! It reminded me of THE USURPERS (also by St. Reynard) in FA a few years ago. Stories like that always make me wonder.

As you can see from the enclosed subscription, Madge is ok with me.

David Papayanopoulos

239 S. 2nd St.

Brooklyn 11, N. Y.

*We think Madge's interior illustrations are second to none. As to long novels we know of no other magazine in the field offering longer complete stories...Matter of fact, many magazines call a 10,000 to 15,000 word story a "novel". In Madge any-*

thing up to 20,000 words is still a novelette! Apparently you missed St. Reynard's sequel to *THE USURPERS* in our November 1951 issue of *Madge*. Back copies are still available at 35c . . . or they can be obtained as part of your subscription . . . wkh

give new letter writers a chance to appear in the column, although many "regulars" are on hand each issue too. So far the serial business is negative. Most of our readers prefer complete stories, and we do too. . . wkh

## PRO LETTER SECTION

Dear Ed:

I got your September issue fresh off the stands, and as is my custom, turned first to the Reader section.

This is my first contact with your magazine, as I have never, for some reason, come across it at the stands. But, as I started to say, I turned to your letter section and — wow! Either you just publish the best letters from the pat-on-the-back standpoint, or else you have one outstanding publication, judging from reader approval.

I have not read your stories yet, but from an editing standpoint *Madge* reminds me no little bit of *Galaxy* which so far to me has been tops.

Back to the old worn rut of serials, I offer a solution: *Galaxy* uses serials and in the short time that magazine has been out it's proven quite popular.

If this letter happens to be published I'll welcome any replies.

Gerry Leonard  
210 Main

Mobridge, S. D.

*No, Gerry, we don't select the pat-on-the-back letters. Naturally we can't publish all the letters that come in on an issue, there just isn't room! But we do try and get a fair cross-section. Granted there are many more praise than pan letters, but that's simply because there aren't very many pan letters! If we do any "choosing" at all it's to try and*

PAGING DAVE VAN ARNAM!

Dear Mr. Hamling:

You seem to be as nice a guy as Sam Mines, editor of TWS, so next time I'll call you Bill!

I've just finished reading my second issue of *Madge*, the September number, and my opinion of your magazine has now changed from one of disgust to admiration.

Why do you print such trash as those TOFFEE yarns? (July issue.) They sound like the delirium tremens of a psychopath! I, personally, consider TOFFEE silly. I could go on, but suffice to say I don't like her.

The cover on that July issue, however, was good. McCauley's wife must be some dish. I wouldn't mind marrying a model myself!

I do have a kick about the July letter column. Specifically, Dave Van Arnham. How can he say that: "If said fans don't like science in their stories let them read AMAZING, STARTLING, THRILLING WONDER, and FANTASTIC ADVENTURES," and so on. How can he dare to say that those books do not emphasize science, logical, or even readable stories! I think SS, TWS, etc. are the best in the field. How come this self-made critic considers himself justified in judging what he hasn't, obviously, read himself? Is he a telepath who got his wires crossed? I'm glad that you at least reduced such imperious conceit in the September letter section.

I liked the stories in the Septem-

ber issue. Was that psychiatrist in Bill Venable's short really Damon Knight or Geoff St. Reynard? They must both have stolen (pardon the expression) their beautiful stories in the same issue from those little green men!

Say, Bill, if this letter sees print I'd like to contact interested fans in the Toronto district to organize a stf fan club. I can be reached by phone at Grover 9788, or, of course, by mail.

In closing, despite my buildup of other magazines in this letter, don't get the idea I dislike Madge. Remember, I've only just met "Madge", and the others are old friends.

Wallace Parsons

73 Sprucehill Rd.

Toronto, Ontario, Canada

*Hey, Wally, is that a nice way to talk about a lady? Our gal TOFFEE is a great favorite in these pages! We can't understand your antipathy toward her—doesn't she give you more than a few laughs? Anyway, we like her — like her? — love her! However, we're glad the September issue rang the bell with you. Rest assured we'll keep on ringing it too!*

. . . wlh

## BELATED TIDINGS

Dear Ed:

This is my first letter to any magazine, and I just wanted you to know how well I like IMAGINATION, and belatedly, the July issue. My "choice" story was and is NO TIME FOR TOFFEE. Myers is it!

Joe Virden

4204 S. Hughes

Amarillo, Texas

*We'll second that motion . . . wlh*

## A WRITER'S VIEWPOINT

Dear Bill:

As most of your readers say in their letters, IMAGINATION is a good magazine. I admire most of the different aspects of it. However, it is your own opinions that sometimes make me see red.

First there was that November editorial; but I'm sure you've already had plenty of criticism about that. It is to the answer that you gave Jim Harper in the July letter column that I am referring. You said in your reply that *Galaxy* should keep being good old *Galaxy* and not nip at *Astounding's* heels in a futile effort. My question is, why not? Why shouldn't *Galaxy* try to become every bit as good as *Astounding* ever was—if it is not already?

It also seems to me that you do not practice what you preach. You told Harper that *Galaxy* should not do what Madge seems to be doing. Haven't you in many editorials stated that Madge will be the best, or close to it? You certainly weren't the best with the first issue, but you have improved with each succeeding issue. Why? Because you have not been satisfied with being just good old Madge, but you improved and will continue to improve. Now that Madge has stepped up publication frequency you've improved again. This will mean more work and worry, but it provided the answer that to succeed you must keep on improving. When you stand pat you are actually failing.

Random items: With Madge going monthly start serials. Serials actually make a monthly magazine.

Daniel F. Galouye is a prolific writer. Some of your readers have complained about the lack of concept in your stories. What was wrong with the concept in TONIGHT THE SKY WILL FALL? I think many readers mistake a lack of concept for a lighter vein in a story.

It seems to me that you summed up your whole editorial policy in an answer to a reader about the movie, *Destination Moon*. You said: "We don't want an education, we want entertainment." Do you think it would have been better to introduce the general public to science fiction with a space opera? No, it was much better to start an stf wary public on something that could, should, and will happen. Another thing, you maintain it was unsuccessful. If this were true what prompted George Pal to make another stf picture—**WHEN WORLDS COLLIDE?**

Mari Wolf's column should be devoted strictly to fan activities. Reading fanzine reviews becomes tiresome. The letter section is too long. You are rather inconsistent in your story lengths. I think that each issue should have about six stories, one lead novel, two novelettes, two shorts, and one short-short. Of course, it is impossible to keep up this regular system, but this would be ideal.

Well, until next issue . . .

Jack Vance  
444 South St.  
Westfield, N. J.

We'll try to answer your points in order, Jack. First, the November editorial. Yes, we did receive many critical letters on it; this is only natural when a controversial subject is discussed. We'll only point out that we received many letters of agreement. Insofar as our personal views go, they haven't changed . . . The reference to *Galaxy* in reply to Jim Harper: You misinterpreted our reply. When we said "nip" at ASF's heels we meant the obvious remarks in *Galaxy's* editorials concerning Astounding; we did not mean that *Galaxy* should not try and become top dog. This answers your next point about practicing what we

preach. Sure, like Horace, we think we've got the best book in the field. Any editor who didn't have confidence in his own product would be seeing his magazine go down the drain . . . or would at best be accomplishing a mediocre task. We note, incidentally, that Horace doesn't stab at Campbell any longer; this is good; this is what we mean by being good old **GALAXY!** We might also say here that we have made reference in a few of our current editorials to a competitive colleague; we wish to state here that our views apply there to a principle throughout the field, not to any individual. We don't like reprints (see our October editorial) and think they hurt the field. We'll always come out and state frankly what we think whenever a subject concerns the general field of stf.

Serials make a monthly magazine? We don't see why. Many readers have written in to us protesting serials, stating they stopped reading magazines containing them. This is neither proof for or against serials—there is none, actually. As in stories themselves, preferences toward serials differ.

About our views on **DESTINATION MOON**. Would we have rather had the public been introduced via space opera? What would you call **THE THING**? Certainly a brother to if not actual space opera. And how did it fare with the general public? It drew larger crowds than **DESTINATION MOON**, and, we understand, made more money. As to the two pictures, we still prefer **THE THING**. It had a suspense story that kept us interested—even enthralled. We never stated that **DESTINATION MOON** was not successful. We stated it pulled less with the public than **THE THING**. And **WHEN WORLDS COLLIDE**, again

*in our opinion, could not hold a candle to THE DAY THE EARTH STOOD STILL, which we think is the finest science fiction film to date. Again, space opera. The answer? Our original contention, we want entertainment, not an education. The public seems to agree. Inconsistency with story lengths? We follow no editorial formula. That would be as you put it, standing pat. We only require that a story be good—regardless of its length . . . Which incidentally, brings us around to you. We've followed your work in other magazines and, even though we've bounced a few of your submissions in the past we'd like to extend a cordial invitation to try again. We'd like to publish some top-notch Vance stories and Madge's readers would welcome reading some, we'll venture. In the meantime, thanks for your interesting letter, and come again . . . wkh*

### MORE PHOTO-COVERS!

Dear Ed:

I just thought I'd write to tell you what a great magazine I think IMAGINATION is. To me Madge is the top magazine in the field.

It was in November of last year that I bought my first copy of Madge. That was the issue that contained the great cover story, BEWARE, THE USURPERS. After reading that issue through I knew there was only one thing to do, get a subscription. I did. I have enjoyed every issue since then. The short stories are great and your illustrations superb. I don't have a single gripe with IMAGINATION!

There is, however, one thing I wish you'd do. Get more photo-dyed covers. To me, they really are terrific.

NO TIME FOR TOFFEE in the

July issue (belatedly acknowledged) was really fine. . . So was the cover—smack, drool! Let's see more of Charles F. Myers soon.

In the current, September issue I thought THE WEAPON FROM ETERNITY was very good. To me Dwight V. Swain is one of your best writers. IT KUD HABBEN TU YU was very good too.

This is the first letter I have ever written to a science fiction magazine so I doubt it will be published. But I'll be looking anyway. And keep up the wonderful work.

Jim Glass  
3312 Cerritos Ave.  
Long Beach, Cal.

*Stop looking, Jim, there you are! As to the photo covers, they take a lot longer to create but you'll be seeing many more in the future. Matter of fact we have a terrific one by Malcolm Smith coming up soon. Madge is setting a new artistic standard in the field with them . . . wkh*

### WATCH THAT MAIL BOX!

Dear Mr. Hamling:

This is my first letter to any science fiction magazine. The only thing that kept me from writing to a magazine sooner was my age. I'm only thirteen.

I became acquainted with science fiction a few years ago when I purchased a copy of *Fantastic Stories Quarterly*. After that I started buying pulp magazines. It was not until last year, however, that I came upon your September issue containing Dwight V. Swain's novel, CRY, CHAOS! That really sold me. Immediately I sent in my subscription and now you've got a reader for life. I can hardly restrain myself as each issue of Madge reaches my mail box. I have subscriptions to only two other magazines, *Astounding*, and

*The Scientific American.* You can see by that how well I like Madge.

I will not say anything about the writers in current issues; all I'll say is—everything about IMAGINATION agrees with me.

Barry Miller  
74 Vulcan St.

San Francisco, Cal.

*Welcome into the fold, Barry. And for gosh sakes, don't be backward about writing us again soon ..wlv*

## CALLING THE TURN

Dear Bill:

It looks like I called the turn a few months ago. I said Madge was improving, and brother, it has! Kindly accept my heartfelt congratulations—you've got a REAL book now!

The last three issues have surpassed my fondest hopes. What stories! Where did you get this boy, Galouye? He's got plenty on the ball. But please, Bill, don't make a hack out of him. Don't let him over-produce. Give him his head, but keep a halter on him. Galouye is the brightest star on the stf horizon that I have seen in a decade. **THE DANGEROUS DOLL** by him in the September issue was a masterpiece. It gripped you from start to finish. Technical skill and talent are present in copious quantities, but polish, that's what makes the difference between a writer and a hack.

Bill Venable's short, **THEFT**, was nicely done. I would like to see more of his work.

Now for the brickbat. **THE WEAPON FROM ETERNITY** reeked to high heaven! The sorriest sort of space opera. What happened to you on this one? Surely you're not that hard up for a lead novel. Oh well, the rest of the issue made up for it!

L. W. Carpenter

442 East "E" St.

Elizabethton, Tenn.

*Dan Galouye has a lot of natural writing talent, and you'll be seeing many fine stories from him in future issues. What about Swain's story? As you can see from other letters, many fans liked it . . . we aim to please everyone, and we know one thing about a Swain story, it keeps moving, the pace is terrific! Glad you think Madge has continued to improve. All we can say is, "you ain't seen nothing yet!" . . . wlv*

## VAN ARNAM RIDES AGAIN!

Dear Ed:

A few asides to letters, etc., in the September Madge.

To Bobby Warner: *Galaxy, Astounding, Magazine of Fantasy & Science Fiction*, and *Other Worlds* (and possibly *Fantastic, If, Space*, though we'll have to give them time) certainly aren't mediocre. However, Madge is on top too—I can always count on a good evening's entertainment with a new issue of Madge. Say, how about a 200 page issue of Madge—that would make a real evening!

To anti-serialites: I agree. No serials, until Madge goes fully monthly (six weekly now).

To Roy Wentz: You are right about story-rating letters, except that when I read story comments I find the views and reasons interesting and provocative.

To Marj Wolf, conductor of **FAN-DORA'S BOX**: 28 fanzines you had, 14 of which you reviewed. 6 columns you used in reviews, 7 and more in your soliloquy. You said you "couldn't possibly cover them all." Suggestion: Since fan editors have to wait so long in the first place you maybe ought to cut your soliloquies short and hasten to review all the

zines you get. More fan comments and less wanderings on non-fan matters.

Definitely, let's have Personals in Madge. This would be the Maraschino on the frosting!

I've changed my mind about Dwight V. Swain. Give him at least 35,000 words (THE WEAPON FROM ETERNITY) and he'll give some enjoyable reading.

Blast it! Give Dan Galouye a new plot for once, will you! REBIRTH was as old as the hills; TONIGHT THE SKY WILL FALL had the same story line as *Infinity's Child* in the May *If*; and THE DANGEROUS DOLL was an unworthy plot in general. These plots were not fit for Mr. Galouye. He is too good a writer—give him a plot!

Mr. Hamling, if you are going to cut letters in your magazine, at least comment that you do so. (I realize there is much extraneous matter in them that has to be cut.)

Say, is this Champion Kromekote on the September issue?

Whoops, almost forgot! I've started a new fanzine, DARK UNIVERSE. Interested parties contact me.

Dave Van Arnham  
1740-34th Ave., N.  
St. Petersburg 4, Fla.

*Glad you liked Swain's story. As to Galouye's TTSWF being similar to a story in the May IF, we didn't read it so we don't know—but you should have said a story in the May IF was similar to Galouye's. Dan's story appeared before IF went on sale—was written before there ever was such a magazine. Bad plot? We liked it—so did our readers for the most part. Ditto Dan's other yarns. Keep your eye on him, he's going places. Yep, Kromekote cover stock, same as GALAXY. We're experimenting with it and may con-*

*tinue to use it . . . Letters are sometimes cut, for, as you point out, conciseness is important with the limited space available for letters. We'll bow out at this point, Dave, another reader is looking for you this month . . . wlt*

SOMEBODY, AH SAY . . .

Dear Ed:

Just finished reading the September issue of Madge and as usual it was wonderful!

Occasion for writing this letter is that this is a sort of anniversary for me—my first full year of science fiction reading. I am a confirmed "addict" now. Trouble is there are only three or four other fans that I know of in this small town. For that reason I'd like to hear from anyone interested in corresponding, preferably around my own age, 16.

Sure wish you had a Personals column, like *Other Worlds*. Other than that nothing more could be asked for, except possibly more photo covers!

Lots of luck from the deep south—ah say, the Deep South!

Wanda Holt  
Box 502  
Edcouch, Texas  
*Happy Anniversary, Wanda . . . wlt*

TO EACH HIS OWN . . .

Dear Ed:

What in Hades has happened to IMAGINATION? The September issue was so corny I gagged on just about every paragraph. The intellectual level of your mag has sunk below even its former moronic level. I'll buy just one more issue and if there isn't any improvement I'm chucking it for good. 35c is just too much to pay for such tripe. Fooey!

Don't you give just one little darn for your readers? I should think you would want to remain in business. There are just too many other good mags on the market to waste time and money on somebody who doesn't care what he gives the reading public. Get wise to yourself, ed, there's a lot of guys who'd like to have your job and could do it a lot better than you seem to have been doing it.

The only redeeming feature about your magazine, so far, is that I have been able to trade it off or sell it for something near what it's actually worth, which isn't much.

As I've said before, I like Science Fiction and Fantasy, but I do not like space opera. If I want adventure stories I'll go to the magazines that publish "good" ones, not to any thinly disguised as science fiction.

Clarence R. McFarland, Jr.  
3612 15th Ave., West  
Seattle 99, Wash.

*Your comments show more emotion than logic, Clarence. The September issue contained five stories, only one of which was an interplanetary adventure. Yet you make a blanket criticism which is not consistent with the facts. Sorry that you haven't been pleased thus far, but the mere fact that you can sell or trade Madge to other fans shows it's worth something! The great majority of science fiction readers value it pretty highly—which happy fact has helped make Madge a leader in the field. Stick around, you don't want to miss anything! . . . . . wh*

## WHAT AN ISSUE!

Dear Ed:

Egad, wow, and pant! What an issue! And that cover—I liked McCauley in previous issues, but this robot cover — what an artist! The September issue is the best Madge

has ever had.

I'm glad to see that you've finally listed each story's type on the contents page.

Again, congrats to you. If more issues come out like this yours will certainly be the top stf mag of them all. And I know that many other readers agree with me.

In closing, I'm looking for pen pals, aged 12 to 14. And thanks.

Tom Piper  
464-19th St.  
Santa Monica, Cal.

*Thanks for the kind words, Tom. And just wait until you see some of the new McCauley covers coming up soon. Honestly, they're the best we have ever seen, and that's a lot! . . . wh*

## A SIMILAR COVER?

Dear Bill:

Well, what a surprise! After reading FANDORA'S BOX, the letter section, and the editorial in the September issue, I glanced at the contents page. What did I find? Madge has gone monthly. At long last. Needless to say, I'm glad to see it happen, but when you omit that phrase, "except March, July and November," I'll be much happier. .

I hope you won't start using serials now that Madge is monthly. When I get a magazine I hate to have to wait to finish one of the stories. Madge is one of the finest magazines published today, but serials would certainly change that!

The cover this issue was good, but it reminded me instantly of another cover I had seen. Sure enough, the March issue had a very similar cover. Strangely enough, both illustrated a Dwight V. Swain novel. Coincidence?

If any fem fans read this I'd like to hear from them. Are there any



here in Sioux City? If so call me at the Base asking for Colonel Cox's quarters . . .

Marian Cox  
79th A. B. Sqdrn.  
Sioux City, Iowa

We'll eliminate that "except" phrase pretty quick, Marian. In the meantime look for Madge every six weeks—the date of the new issue's publication is always listed in the preceding one. Your comment about the "similar" covers puzzles us. The March issue and the September were quite dissimilar in subject matter. As to serials, we're not contemplating using them . . . . . with

. . . Now for the letter receiving the most votes as "best" in the September issue. The honors went to Ron D. Rentz, 130 Vera St., West Hartford 7, Conn. Congrats, Ron, and you have your choice of any interior illustration in the September issue. You name it and the original's on its way to you! . . . Which sums up this issue, gang. Get your letters in fast and don't forget to vote for the best letter—it might be your own! See you at the newsstands November 11th with the January issue. Or better yet, subscribe and get your copy early! . . . . . with

\* \* \*

## IN ISSUES TO COME:



**EARTHSMITH**

by Milton Lesser



**ADOLESCENTS ONLY**

by Irving Cox, Jr.



**SPILLTHROUGH**

by Daniel F. Galouye



**THE DARK GODDESS**

by Richard S. Shaver



**THE MIND MASTERS**

by Dwight V. Swain

Plus many other feature stories by top writers in the science fiction field!

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## The Magic of Mind

**W**ERE the great personages of the past victims of a stupendous hoax? Could such eminent men of the ancient world as Socrates, Pericles, and Alexander the Great have been deluded and cast under the spell of witchcraft—or did the oracles whom they consulted actually possess a *mysterious faculty of foresight*? That *the human mind can truly exert an influence over things and conditions* was not a credulous belief of the ancients, but a known and demonstrable fact to them. That there exists a wealth of infinite knowledge just beyond the border of our daily thoughts, which can be aroused and commanded at will, was not a fantasy of these sages of antiquity, but a dependable aid to which they turned in time of need.

It is time you realized that the rites, rituals and practices of the ancients were not superstitions, but subterfuges to conceal the marvelous workings of natural law from those who would have misused them. Telepathy, projection of thought, the materializing of ideas into helpful realities, are no longer thought by intelligent persons to be impossible practices, but instead, *demon-*

*strable sciences*, by which a greater life of happiness may be had.

One of America's foremost psychologists and university instructors, says of his experiments with thought transference and the powers of mind—"The successes were much too numerous to be merely lucky hits and one can see no way for guessing to have accounted for the results." *Have you* that open-minded attitude of today which warrants a clear, positive revelation of the facts of mind which intolerance and bigotry have suppressed for years? *Advance with the times*; learn the truth about your inherited powers.

### Let this free book explain

The Rosicrucians (NOT a religious organization) have been leaders in introducing the ancient wisdom of mental phenomena. Established throughout the world for centuries, they have for ages expounded these truths to those thinking men and women who sought to make the utmost of their natural faculties. To avail yourself of a pleasing book of interesting information which explains how you may acquire this most *unusual and helpful knowledge*. Write today to: Scribe I A.J.

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SAN JOSE, CALIFORNIA, U.S.A.



## **TOMORROW'S SCIENCE**

**M33 IN TRIANGULUM:** One of two nearest spiral nebulae to our galaxy, Messier star field lies some 880,000 light years from our Sun. If large telescopes could "see" life there, it would be a civilization that existed nearly a million years ago!

Another scan  
by  
cape1736

